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The Brady Punch

TOM BRADY WILL LEAD HIS PATRIOTS AGAINST THE SEAHAWKS IN THE BATTLE TO BE SUPER BOWL CHAMPS PAGE 24

NEWS WORTH SHARING.

SO LONG, STOLLERY'S

A worker demolishes the facade of the Stollery's stalwart menswear store at Yonge and Bloor on Sunday afternoon. Coun. Kristyn Wong-Tam took steps to have the 114-year-old structure, known for its art deco detailing, arched windows and carved stonework, designated a heritage building, and is surprised it is already being torn down. Story, page 8. DAVID COOPER/TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

Sweetheart condo deals at Regent Park

Real estate. There's tremendous value in newly revitalized area

ROSEMARY WESTWOOD
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Some buyers are finding great deals in the downtown core amid predictions of another pricey year for real estate in Toronto.

The basic message from agents: Look southeast.

A two-bedroom condo in a building that's part of the Regent Park redevelopment project, for example, sold recently for $380,000 — $4,900 less than the asking price in a city where bidding wars have become the norm. In the same area, a two-bedroom condo with a south-facing terrace will soon be on the market for $399,000.

Both are far cheaper than the average downtown two-bedroom condo, which went for $558,986 in the third quarter of 2014, according to the Toronto Real Estate Board.

"The same condo in King West would be $579,000," said David Fleming, a realtor with Bosley Real Estate Ltd. Brokerage, and the listing agent for the $399,000 unit. "The same condo in the St. Lawrence Market area, which is maybe three blocks south, three blocks west, would be $499,000."

"There's tremendous value in that new revitalized Regent Park area," he added.

A Royal LePage forecast shows Toronto's condo and home prices are expected to continue their climb in 2015. That makes the Regent Park development somewhat of a diamond in the rough, said Regent Park Life real estate broker Lamis Dantas.

"Whoever's moving in here is coming to an area which is still a work in progress, so the prices reflect that," she said.

Derek Boswick bought a two-bedroom condo a few years ago. Other condos he looked at in the Wellesley Avenue-Yonge Street area, for example, were priced tens of thousands above his Regent Park unit.

"It's saved me $30,000 so I guess I shouldn't complain," he said. "It's a neighbourhood that's changing, and it's just going to get better."

Undervalued in T.O.

How many areas are still relatively undervalued in Toronto when it comes to real estate?

- Outside the southeast side of the downtown core, "there's not a whole heck of a lot," said David Fleming, realtor with Bosley Real Estate Ltd. Brokerage.
- Developments in St. James Town are a few years ahead of the southeast side, making them slightly more pricey.
- Some buyers are worried about oversupply with a massive new development in the West Don Lands area, he noted, but added that new parks, basketball courts and a skate park all point to an area on the rise.

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Mary Walsh

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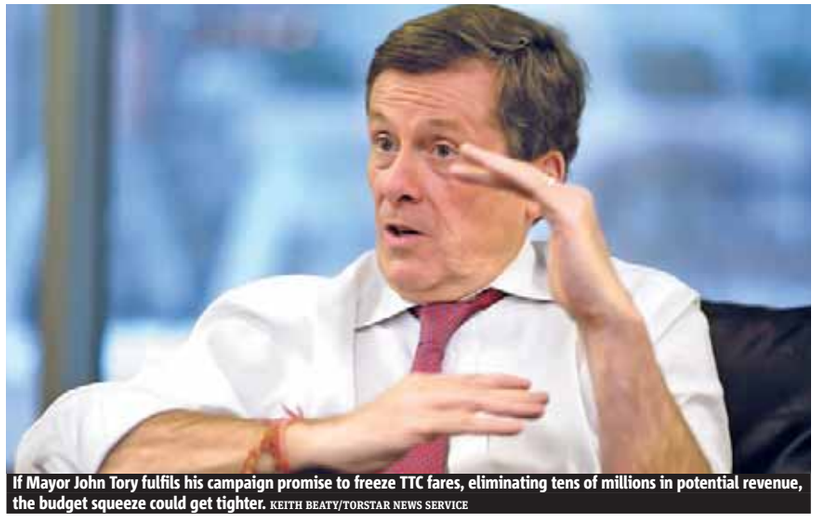
Dramatic changes unlikely in Mayor Tory's first city budget

City Hall. As usual, the Toronto budget was largely written by municipal bureaucrats



If Mayor John Tory fulfils his campaign promise to freeze TTC fares, eliminating tens of millions in potential revenue, the budget squeeze could get tighter. KEITH BEATY/TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

Mayor John Tory's first budget comes out on Tuesday. It can more accurately be described as Joe Pennachetti's last budget.

A mayor's second budget is the one he can sculpt to his liking. His first, issued less than two months after he takes office, is largely written by city bureaucrats under the direction of Pennachetti, the retiring city manager, and chief financial officer Rob Rossini.

Bold moves are unlikely.

"I always think we have to manage our expectations. A post-election budget never has a lot of major change in it," said Coun. Shelley Carroll, budget chief under David Miller and now a member of the budget committee.

Tory's budget chief, Coun. Gary Crawford, said city officials "pretty much had done the majority of the budget" before they knew who would be elected mayor.

"It's very much a staff-generated budget. There hasn't been a lot of councillor input," Crawford said Wednesday. "So I'm just, at this point, really just trying to work with staff to get the final budget in place, at a very high level. Because I haven't had an opportunity to look at a lot of the detail, nor has anybody else on the budget committee."

The bureaucrats tend to give the rookie mayor wiggle room to do some spending on some of his key promises. Tory has hinted at quick action on homelessness and poverty, and he says his top priorities are transportation and traffic.

In a speech days before he took office, he said he wants to try to find a way to reverse Rob Ford's cuts to bus services.

"I would be disappointed in myself and disappointed in the process of government if we did everything exactly the same, because I ran on a platform of expressly changing some things, and I've had lots of opportunities since then to be briefed on other changes that I think need to be made," Tory said last week.

The budget will take only limited steps toward some of Tory's ambitious campaign promises.

He said he would double the city's tree-planting budget, investing an extra $7 million per year. This budget will include a much smaller increase: Crawford said the mayor hasn't yet had a chance to explain how his big spending proposal squares with the city's existing tree-planting push.

"That's been vague from him," Crawford said. "And so we need to sit down, even through this process, (and find out) what does this pledge actually mean?"

The budget includes an "operating budget" now approaching $10 billion, which covers day-to-day spending on programs and services, and a "capital budget" for infrastructure construction and repairs. By law, the operating budget must be balanced.

This year's balancing has to be done despite the loss of $86 million in provincial funding and what Pennachetti says is a depleted pool of "efficiencies" left to be wrung from the system.

The squeeze would get tighter if Tory fulfils his campaign promise to freeze TTC fares, eliminating tens of millions in potential revenue.

Coun. James Pasternak, a member of Tory's executive committee, said residents should expect "a very tight budget and not a lot of goodies to hand out."

Tory says he will keep his pledge to limit the residential property tax increase to the rate of inflation. But he and city officials could plausibly pick any of several inflation figures — the Canada-wide inflation rate (two per cent in November), the Ontario rate (2.4 per cent), and the city's own rate (2.7 per cent) all differ.

They have another choice to make about how to handle the already-approved 0.5 per cent increase that will be dedicated entirely to the Scarborough subway.

That increase could be included in the inflationary tax hike — in which case Tory would have even less freedom to manoeuvre — or could be added in on top, for an above-inflation total increase that would leave Tory more vulnerable to criticism from the right.

Whatever it is, the proposed tax hike is almost certain to pass.

Some of council's left-leaning members, though, may press the case for a larger increase.

More budget coverage can be found on page 14.

TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

Quoted

"I always think we have to manage our expectations. A post-election budget never has a lot of major change in it."

Coun. Shelley Carroll, member of the budget committee

At a glance

Tuesday's budget is merely a draft. The budget committee and executive committee can propose changes at meetings in February and early March. Council will make the final tweaks at a meeting that begins March 10.

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Hamilton

Alleged robber used a hammer

Hamilton police say a man who tried to rob a jewelry store with a hammer ended up in hospital.

The man was arrested Thursday night after the store's staff subdued him, but police say they are still looking for a second suspect.

It's alleged the two men strolled into the store inside the Eastgate Square around 8:30 p.m., one armed with the hammer, the other with a gun. Police say the man with the hammer grabbed merchandise. The other suspect fired his gun before taking off, police say.

There's no immediate word on charges.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

Brampton

3 struck as SUV hits restaurant

Three pedestrians were transported to hospital on Saturday night after an SUV crashed into a restaurant in Brampton, Ont.

Peel Regional Police say the victims were walking in front of the restaurant at about 8:30 p.m. when they were struck by the vehicle as it backed into the building (near Kennedy Rd. and Queen St.) causing significant damage to the premises. Police say all three victims are expected to make a full recovery.

Police say the owner of the vehicle had parked the SUV and entered a local business when the suspect, who is known to the SUV's owner, took control of the vehicle and crashed it into the restaurant.

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Police sealed off an entrance to the Finch subway station and also a North York condominium at 39 Pemberton Ave. after a body was discovered in a penthouse unit of the building. VICTOR BIRO/FOR METRO

Man charged with killing father, 61

Police standoff.
18-year-old charged after father's body found in their shared North York condo

Police have charged an 18-year-old man with second-degree murder after his father's body was found in their shared condo in North York.

Toronto police responded to a call about a young man with a knife at Finch subway station around 10:30 p.m. on Saturday after receiving "various calls" from the community, said homicide detective Robert North.

Officers from 32 Division along with the Emergency Task Force attended two locations in the Finch and Yonge area.

"The first location being the Finch Avenue subway station, once on scene, officers located a male who was suffering from apparent self-inflicted wounds," North said at a news conference Sunday.

"Fortunately, our ETF officers were able to negotiate the surrender of that male successfully. He was taken into custody.

"A short time later, officers attended a residential area in the vicinity of the Finch subway station. There officers located a deceased 61-year-old male who suffered from blunt-force trauma injuries to his body."

Police have identified the man in custody as Uchenna Onochie, the 18-year-old son of the deceased man, Aloy Onochie.

Both men lived in a 12-storey upscale condo building in a gated community on Pemberton Ave., a five-minute walk from the subway station.

The younger Onochie is facing one count of second-degree murder and is scheduled to appear in court Monday.

Residents said they were shocked when they heard the sirens and saw an army of police cruisers descending on the condo complex Saturday night.

A command post and a forensics investigative team were at the scene overnight.

North refused to speculate on the motive or say if there are others who lived at the address.

It was the city's second homicide of the year.

TORSTAR NEWS SERVICES

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Toronto is about to play home to work from some of the best designers across the continent. The Toronto Design Offsite festival starts Monday with exhibitions and installations popping up across downtown. This year, organizers are showcasing designs from across Canada and the U.S. through a project called Outside the Box. Design correspondents in Montreal, Calgary, Vancouver, New York, Chicago, Detroit, Seattle and Los Angeles selected works that represent the cities, put them in boxes and shipped them to Toronto. Pieces from the American cities will be on display at Design Within Reach, a showroom of contemporary furniture at 435 King St. W. Work from Canadian cities will be on display at a variety of venues. These are five of the many things to check out.

GILBERT NGABO/METRO
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5 Things to see at Toronto Design Offsite Festival

1 Exporting Toronto Design

COURTESY TORONTO DESIGN OFFSITE FESTIVAL

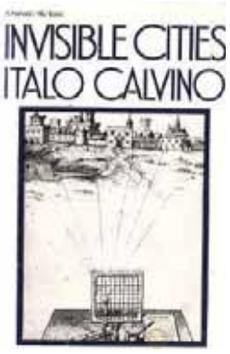
Toronto has talented designers in furniture, lighting and textiles that can rival those in well-known design centres such as Brooklyn, Amsterdam, London and Milan, said Deborah Wang, the festival's creative director.

Still, the question exists, said Wang: Why aren't our designers well known worldwide?

The issue will be explored during a discussion with industry leaders at 6:30 p.m. Tuesday at Lightform (267 Niagara St.).

2 A Dawn for Leonia

Part of an ongoing project at Harbourfront Centre (235 Queens Quay W.), this is an interpretation of a passage from author Italo Calvino's book, Invisible Cities. The work imagines a world where all natural resources have been depleted as a result of years and years of industrialization. While it's part of the design festival, the exhibition doesn't open until Saturday. It will be in place through early summer.



COURTESY TORONTO DESIGN OFFSITE FESTIVAL

3 Canadiana Curiosities

The window installation at Above Ground Art Supplies (2868 Dundas St. W.) is a showcase of unique Canadian objects.

Whether it's oddities from lumberjack camps or yurts, the exhibition promises to blend the supernatural, the surreal and the true north strong and free.

COURTESY TORONTO DESIGN OFFSITE FESTIVAL

4 In-Context Video Series

Hosted at various venues along Dundas Street West, the series profiles public architecture projects and their impact.

It's meant to hone in on how architecture can improve our lives. Featured projects come from cities across Canada, including Montreal, Calgary, Yellowknife and, of course, Toronto.

COURTESY TORONTO DESIGN OFFSITE FESTIVAL

5 Come Up To My Room 2015

This is a chance to experience the Gladstone Hotel in a new way.

All floors of the hotel have been taken over for the ultimate showing in alternative design.

You can expect to see everything from crafts to landscape design to sound installations to fine art.

TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

uCiC app makes aims to crowdfound guide to city

Sukhsagar Singh presents uCiC at the Consumer Electronics Show earlier this month, where the service won the Mobile Apps Showdown. TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

Is there a big lineup at Burger's Priest? Are there any Frozen Lego kits at the Disney Store in the Eaton Centre? What's the scene like at the Drake Hotel?

These are the kind of questions that the recently launched app uCiC (pronounced you see, I see) hopes to answer.

Created by Toronto-based Snapwise Inc., co-founded by Sukhsagar Singh and Harleen Kaur, it is a location-based mobile app that allows people to make requests of each other, and get quick answers with a photo or short video back.

"It is for anything that is real-time that you can't find anywhere else, and the only way you can get that information is if you ask somebody who happens to be there," explains Singh.

"Let's say you are going to the gym this evening. There is currently no way for you to find out if at a given hour if the gym is packed or not. You could call the gym; they could go check, but no gym really does that. What you can do is ask a stranger. So if someone is using this app, it will show you their location in real-time and you can write them a quick question and if someone using the app is there, they can take a picture of what it is like right now."

It is an idea that is already impressing people, as earlier this month uCiC won the Mobile Apps Showdown at the Consumer Electronics Show in Las Vegas. Kaur is currently in Germany speaking to potential investors and the company plans to expand and staff up right away.

The app needs a critical mass of people using and contributing to it for the concept to work. To that end, every user who signs up gets 50 Karma points, and they use 10 or more to make a request.

Singh says the company wants to build by focusing on locations, such as college campuses, to get users in a concentrated area. He also says it could work well at festival settings such as New York's Fashion Week. TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

Stronger nutrition labelling on Board of Health's agenda

On the menu. Industry pushing back on move to mandate smaller chain restaurants to put caloric and sodium info on their menus

JESSICA SMITH CROSS
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According to Toronto Public Health, knowledge is power: the knowledge of how much sodium and fat is in the burrito you want to order will give you the power to make a healthier choice.

At its meeting Monday, the Board of Health will consider asking the province to strengthen a bill, currently before the legislature, to mandate chain restaurants put caloric and sodium info on their menus.

In its current form, the provincial bill asks chains of 20 or more restaurants to include caloric information. Toronto Public Health would like to see smaller chains — those with 10 or more restaurants nationwide — include the calorie count on their menus, and a sodium count as well.

Loren Vanderlinden, manager Healthy Public Policy, said those smaller chains feasibly could do menu labelling, "without too much hardship."

"It stands to reason that if you have a lower threshold, you're going to capture more (restaurants)," she said.

But the restaurant industry is pushing back.

Restaurants Canada spokesman James Rilett said lowering the threshold to 10 or more restaurants would be a disincentive for regional chain restaurants from other provinces to invest in Toronto.

"If a chain were large enough to fit under the tighter requirements, they would be forced to make different menus and menu boards for a single location. This would jeopardize investment in the city by popular regional chains," he wrote, in a letter to Board of Health, released to Metro.

But not all restaurants are opposed to the idea.

Chris Phillips, president of the Fat Bastard Burrito Company, said he thinks it's a great idea. His company has 12 restaurants and is already planning to start offering customers nutrition information.

For his company, the process will involve hiring a company that will use a computer program to determine the nutritional information of each of the menu items, ordered as "the works" with everything on it, he said. He doesn't know how much it will cost.

He doesn't think it will be too difficult for his company, because each burrito is made from standard ingredients.

"We chop our own vegetables, we make our own guac from avocados," he said. "I know exactly what the measurements are for each of our burritos."

Joe Vassallo Sr., founder of the 18-restaurant chain Burrito Boyz, said his company already has nutritional information on its website, but the new law might make it more difficult.

The website lists the nutrition information of each type of burrito with the works, but people change burritos every time they order them, and then the calorie count changes dramatically.

"It's different with whatever you put in it," he said. "It's up to how educated the consumer is. You can go get a large poutine or you can get some vegetables — the consumer, he knows the choice. You don't have to tell him how it is."

He thinks educating the consumer on nutrition generally, rather than through the restaurant, is better. "In our case, if you order a lot of veggies, it's good for you, if you order a lot of beans, it's good for you, but if you order a lot of cheese it's a different story."

According to Rilett, the restaurant industry "is not against menu labelling per se," but considers that the addition of sodium levels, as well as calories, to menus has "the potential for 'program creep' that would lead to an ever-increasing number of nutritional values to be added to the menu."

Leanne Dielschneider, co-owner of Burrito Boyz in Hamilton, prepares one of the restaurant's burritos in this 2013 file photo. TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

Menu labelling

Diners want more info, study finds

Putting sodium counts, not just calorie counts, on menus is important to Toronto Public Health, said Loren Vanderlinden, manager Healthy Public Policy.

"Consuming high amounts of sodium can lead to high blood pressure and high blood pressure is a condition that leads to heart disease, stroke, kidney diseases, and we know that one in four people in Ontario has high blood pressure," she said.

Loren Vanderlinden
TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

"It's really about better protecting the public's health by making the information readily available, so when they're choosing meals in a restaurant setting, they can make an informed choice."

Vanderlinden said there's strong public support for menu labelling, because they would like to know what they're eating, and public Health's research has shown that Torontonians want calories and sodium counts on their menus.

Safina Allidina, business manager at teaBOT, with a piping hot brew from the automated machine. DAVID VAN DYKE/METRO

TeaBOT set for TDot invasion

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A new startup for tea lovers is brewing in Toronto.

Set to launch in February, teaBOT will be installing robotic tea kiosks at popular locations throughout the city.

The automated machines let users steep their own blend of loose leaf tea for $2.85.

"It's a tea store in less than 10 square feet," said co-founder Brian Lee.

Lee got the idea while watching customers wait in line at his mother's tea shop in Sudbury, Ont. It's all built around the idea of pumping tea into cups — and people's hands — as quickly as possible.

TeaBOT

$2.85

Cost per teaBOT cup

With that in mind, Lee and friend Rehman Merali — a robotics PhD at University of Toronto — scrawled a prototype "on a napkin at a sushi restaurant" and teaBOT was born.

"The numbers tell you that tea is the fastest growing sector of the beverage industry," Lee said, noting the market is expected to grow 40 per cent by 2020. "It's growth has been catching up to coffee."

TeaBOT kiosks let tea drinkers pick a custom blend of leaves, which is then mixed on the spot and dropped in a cup. Once users have created their favourite brew, they can store it or share it with friends via the company's smartphone app.

"It fits with our demographics," Merali said. "Young millenials want to be able to customize everything."

For more information, visit myteabot.com.

Their picks

- TeaBOT co-founder Rehman Merali's favourite blend to brew is gunpowder green tea with peppermint.
- Co-founder Brian Lee, meanwhile, prefers an Oolong Chai with nuts.

114-year-old Stollerys coming down

Demolition. New owner has started to take facade down, just days after an attempt to have the building designated a heritage site

The Stollerys building started to come down piece by piece this weekend, just days after Coun. Kristyn Wong-Tam took steps to have the 114-year-old structure designated a heritage building.

"I was really appalled to see such a sudden attempt by new owners to get rid of the building so quickly," said Adam Birrell, who has lived in the neighbourhood for six years.

The building with familiar green awnings at Yonge and Bloor has been owned by the retailer of British and European apparel since 1901.

Birrell, who has previously worked to preserve heritage properties in Thornhill, is concerned the building is being taken down before the city can determine whether it has heritage value. If the site already was listed as a heritage property, it couldn't be torn down.

But developer Sam Mizrahi says he doesn't think the building deserves preservation.

"We don't feel there is any heritage value to it and neither did anyone else for the last 100 years," he said.

And Mizrahi is well within his legal rights. He bought the building in October and applied for a demolition permit earlier this month. It was approved on Friday and the work started right away.

Wong-Tam noted that the city must issue a permit when all statutory requirements are met according to provincial law.

She asked it be considered for heritage designation at a Jan. 13 community council meeting — the first opportunity she said she had to bring up the issue after the election.

"I moved as quickly as I could," she said.

Wong-Tam said she isn't certain it deserved heritage designation but she thinks it should have been looked at. That process would have taken the heritage preservation committee at least four to five months, she said.

The sudden movement on the property has had Wong-Tam fielding calls from those concerned in the neighbourhood.

"This demolition is coming as a surprise, in my opinion, to the residents and business operators on Bloor Street," Wong-Tam said.

Workers demolish the facade of the Stollerys upscale men's wear store at Bloor and Yonge on Sunday afternoon. The developer doesn't think the building deserves preservation, despite a councillor's move to have the 114-year-old structure designated a heritage building. DAVID COOPER/TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

Mizrahi says demolition is a "long-process" and one he got started to be able to determine the requirements for putting up a new structure in its place.

"You can't do it with a building that is sitting on top of there," he said.

Wong-Tam's concerned that Mizrahi has not made a development application yet, raising questions about what will replace Stollerys, how long it will take to get that structure in place and whether it will mean an eyesore on one of the city's most important street corners.

But Mizrahi says he has no intention of keeping the lot vacant for long. He says he understands the "iconic" nature of the spot he's purchased and is envisioning a project worthy of it. He's hired prominent British architect Norman Foster to build a retail and residential building to rival the landmarks of New York, Chicago and London.

But Birrell thinks tearing down the building in place now is simply "a lack of foresight and imagination." He thinks there is good reason to keep the art-deco detailing, arched windows and carved stonework.

"You don't get that back," said Birrell.

TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

U of T project advocates changes to refugee policies

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Canadian refugee and resettlement policies are negatively impacting would-be refugee claimants abroad who have HIV or are at high risk of contracting the virus, a University of Toronto program alleges.

The International Human Rights Program at the university's faculty of law is launching a research project to advocate for changes on the immigration policy that has created the "designated countries of origin" list.

The Immigration office says people from those listed countries are "less likely" to be prosecuted, thus less worthy of a refugee status in Canada. Many of those countries are members of the European Union, some from Asia, plus the U.K. and U.S.

But in some of those countries, the risk of contracting HIV, being stigmatized or facing prosecution is higher for refugees, sexual minorities or those who've suffered gender-based violence, said Renu Mandhane, the program director. Canada should help those people to rebuild their lives here and get access to necessary medical treatment without fear of persecution, she said.

"Having HIV when you're a refugee living in a camp bordering Syria is potentially a death sentence," she said. "Canada can play an important role in the global fight against HIV by providing asylum to people affected or at high risk, and provide them with access to medical treatment."

The research project will focus on Mexico and Syria as case studies. Syria is not on the list of countries deemed to be safe, but there are many refugees on its borders that need equal attention due to the vulnerability surrounding them, said Mandhane.

"When you come here from Mexico as a refugee, basically you're hurried through the process under the assumption that your claim is bogus," she said, explaining that sexual minority groups in that country still face a significant threat of persecution.

The program will hire a lawyer to work and supervise law students who will be working on this project, which will also serve as a training opportunity for future social justice lawyers, she added. Researchers will travel to Mexico and countries surrounding Syria to meet and talk to people affected by this policy.

The program, which recently got a $75,000 grant from the Elton John AIDS Foundation, is expected to conduct field research this summer and come up with the findings next fall.

Renu Mandhane, program director of the International Human Rights Program at the U of T. CONTRIBUTED

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Language. Quebec rejects calls to do more for Anglos

The Quebec government has rejected a renewed call by Canada's official languages commissioner that it create an office of anglophone affairs to better serve the province's linguistic minority.

Graham Fraser told The Canadian Press he met with the three Liberal anglophone members of the legislature and said there was "no indication" the governing party would create a body dedicated to Quebec's 600,000 anglophones.

The government's reaction is not a surprise to community groups in Quebec who often complain the Liberal government's rhetoric about the province's anglophones doesn't match its actions.

The Liberals publicly acknowledge the importance of the province's English speakers — as opposed to their predecessors who were, at times, openly hostile to Quebec's largest linguistic minority.

Official Languages commissioner Graham Fraser THE CANADIAN PRESS

But members of Quebec's anglophone minority say local control over institutions at the heart of their community is slowly eroding, as is their influence over public policy — regardless of the government in power. THE CANADIAN PRESS

Palestinians hurl eggs, shoes at Baird's convoy

Ramallah. Foreign Minister John Baird greeted by dozens of protesters during visit to Palestine

Dozens of Palestinian protesters hurled eggs and shoes at the convoy of the visiting Canadian foreign minister Sunday in a show of defiance toward Canada's perceived pro-Israel stance.

John Baird was visiting Ramallah to meet Palestinian Foreign Minister Riad Malki when demonstrators pelted his convoy.

Baird shrugged off the incident. "I was in Mike Harris' cabinet for four years. I got a lot worse," Baird told reporters afterward, referring to Harris's Progressive Conservative government in Ontario that was often targeted for its cost cutting.

The Palestinian protesters also held signs reading: "Baird, you are not welcome in Palestine" and "Baird, Jerusalem is our capital." Media reports say Baird was not hit.

"We take a strong position supporting the only liberal and democratic state in the region," Baird said. "We take the view that (in) a peace process, progress is best made at the negotiating table and not through unilateral actions on the other side. We're proud of that position, we believe it's the best one and don't apologize for it."

Activists from Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas' Fatah party earlier had called for a boycott of Baird because of Canada's Middle East policies.

"This person backs up the Zionist movement," protester Abdullah Abu-Rahmeh said. "This person diminishes the rights of our people, takes part and backs up building of settlements. We tell him that he's not welcome." THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Canada's pro-Israel stance

Canada has been one of only a few Western countries to stand by Israel as it has come under fierce international criticism over deadlocked negotiations with the Palestinians, the recent Gaza war and its settlement building.

- Canada also opposes the Palestinians' unilateral attempts to reach statehood as well as its recent bid to pursue war crime charges against Israel at the International Criminal Court.

Alta. Injured Mountie not expected to survive: RCMP

The RCMP officer who was shot in the head at close range Saturday, while trying to arrest a suspect, is not expected to survive his injuries, Alberta RCMP say.

Const. David Wynn and Auxiliary Const. Derek Bond were the two St. Albert officers who responded to reports of a stolen vehicle early Saturday morning at the Apex Casino.

After locating the 34-year-old suspect, Shawn Maxwell Rehn, both officers were shot as they attempted to arrest him.

Bond suffered from a bullet wound to his torso and arm, while Wynn was shot in the head immediately after.

The short, yet violent altercation happened within a matter of seconds, said asst. commissioner Marlin Degrand.

The incident has prompted the RCMP to undergo an analysis on how Rehn was able to be in the community. According to RCMP commissioner Bob Paulson, it's hard to understand how Rehn was out in public, considering his extensive history of violence. Rehn had a series of gun-related charges and conditions, including one that forbid from possessing a firearm for life. Both officers were unaware of Rehn's history, Paulson said, when they went to make the arrest.

While Wynn's condition is grave, Deputy Commissioner Marianne Ryan said, Bond has been released from hospital, but will remain under observation.

LEAH HOLOIDAY/METRO IN EDMONTON

A tearful welcome for HMCS Toronto

Lt.-Comm. Sheldon Gillis, left, embraces his daughter Ella, 8, after disembarking from the HMCS Toronto in Halifax on Sunday morning following a seven-month deployment. The warship was taking part in a NATO exercise in the Mediterranean Sea responding to Russia's military aggression in Ukraine.

JEFF HARPER/METRO IN HALIFAX

Winnipeg

MP: Why no Flag Day celebration?

A Winnipeg MP left wondering why there's no real hoopla planned to mark next month's 50th birthday of Canada's Maple Leaf flag has decided to fly his own plans up the flag pole.

Winnipeg North MP Kevin Lamoureux said he's worried our flag's golden anniversary on Feb. 15 may go by unnoticed because the federal government isn't doing anything major to mark the occasion.

Feb. 15 was named National Flag of Canada Day in 1996 and marks the anniversary of the first time the Maple Leaf flag flew at Parliament Hill in Ottawa back in 1965.

Canadian Heritage recently said the day would be marked by educational activities and special events, but the department couldn't say how much it's spending on the flag's birthday. Lamoureux said he thinks the Maple Leaf flag deserves better treatment on its 50th. He'll be sending mailers reminding constituents about the occasion to every home in his riding and is planning a flag raising ceremony on the 15th. SHANE GIBSON/METRO, WITH FILES FROM THE CANADIAN PRESS

DND aims to add more stringent oversight of military intelligence

National Defence has been looking at ways to introduce more stringent oversight of its intelligence operations, but "fiscal restraint" may prevent the department from implementing the preferred option.

A series of internal documents, obtained by The Canadian Press under access-to-information legislation, show the head of defence intelligence ordered an independent review — which was conducted in the wake of the scandal involving navy sub-Lt. Jeffery Delisle, who was convicted of spying for the Russians.

Unlike the Canadian Security Intelligence Service and the Communications Security Establishment, there is no direct civilian oversight body to review the actions and operations of military agents, who conduct investigations into possible threats against the Forces both overseas and on Canadian soil.

The powers of intelligence services have come under the microscope following allegations of National Security Agency eavesdropping in the U.S., and the bombshell revelations of former contractor Edward Snowden.

Closer to home, CSE has faced questions about its activities.

The draft defence intelligence review lays out four options, of which the preferred would be a permanent, independent review board reporting directly to the minister and taking its authority from the federal Inquiries Act.

But in recommending the idea, the report noted defence may have to accept a watered-down version in the form of a part-time review team — a so-called hybrid option — that would be appointed for external reviews when necessary.

The assessment said they recognized that "in a period of fiscal restraint and downsizing" a permanent review team might not be possible and that the government might want to "avoid the challenges and costs" of setting up the body. THE CANADIAN PRESS

In this aerial photo provided by the Philippine Air Force, a massive crowd of Filipino faithful fills up the Rizal Park during a Mass celebrated by Pope Francis Sunday in Manila, Philippines. PHILIPPINE AIR FORCE/AP PHOTO

Pope draws 6M to Manila Mass

Record figure. Francis dedicated the final part of his week-long Asia trip to children

A crowd estimated at a record six million people by officials poured into Manila's rain-soaked streets and its biggest park Sunday as Pope Francis ended his Asian pilgrimage with an appeal for Filipinos to protect their young from sin and vice so they can instead become missionaries of the faith.

The crowd estimate, which could not be independently verified, included people who attended the pope's final Mass in Rizal Park and surrounding areas, and lined his motorcade route, said the chairman of the Metropolitan Manila Development Authority, Francis Tolentino.

The Vatican spokesman, the Rev. Federico Lombardi, said the Vatican had received the figure officially from local authorities and that it was a record, surpassing the five million who turned out for St. John Paul II's final Mass in the same park in 1995.

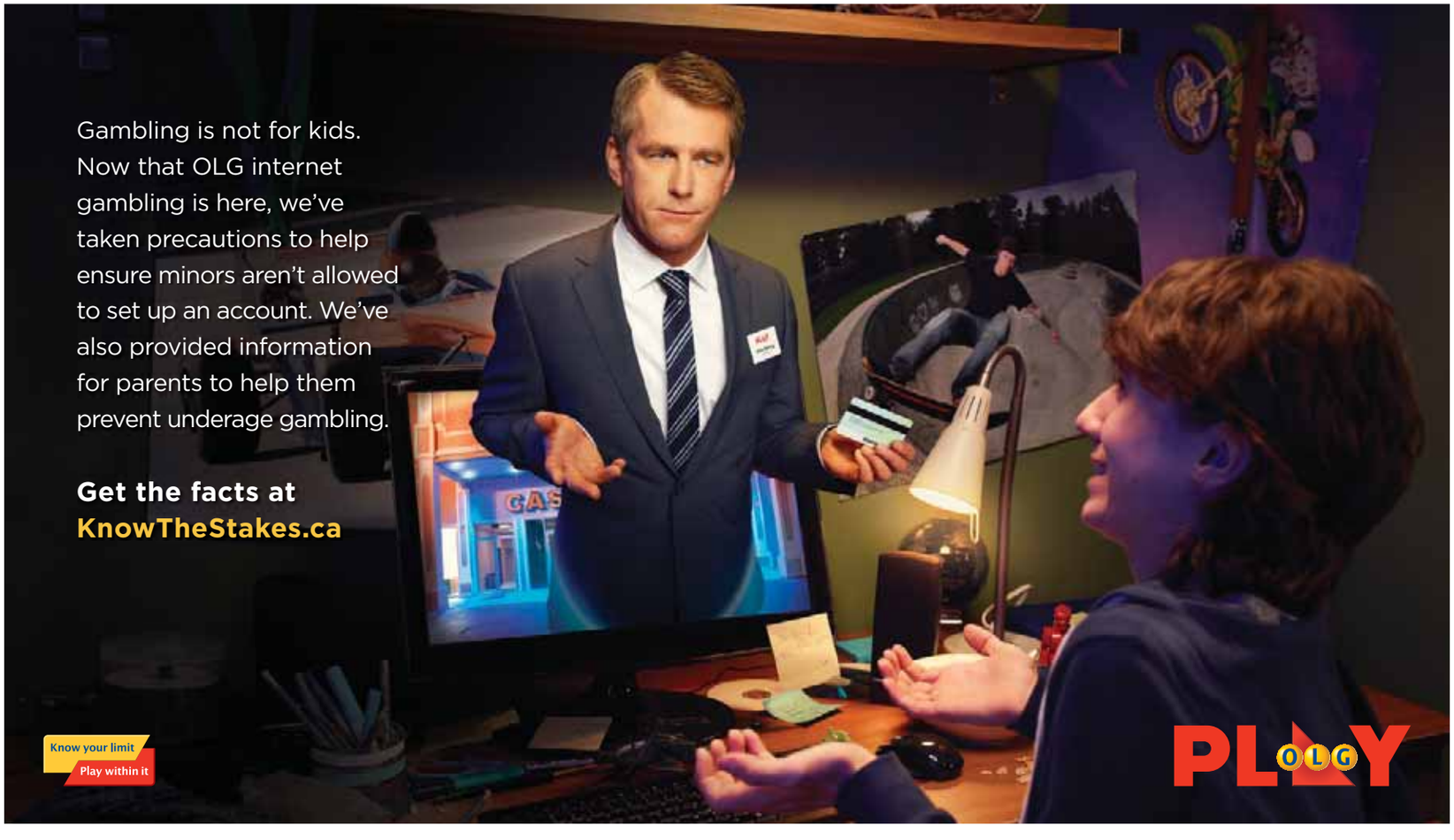
Francis dedicated the final homily of his week-long Asia trip, which began in Sri Lanka, to children, given that the Mass fell on an important feast day honouring the infant Jesus. His focus was a reflection of the importance that the Vatican places on Asia as the future of the church since it's one of the few places where Catholic numbers are growing — and on the Philippines as the largest Catholic nation in the region.

"We need to see each child as a gift to be welcomed, cherished and protected," Francis said in his homily. "And we need to care for our young people, not allowing them to be robbed of hope and condemned to a life on the streets."

Francis made a triumphant entry into Rizal Park, riding on a popemobile based on the design of a jeepney, the modified U.S. Army World War II jeep that is a common means of public transport in Manila. He wore the same cheap, plastic yellow rain poncho handed out to the masses during his visit to the typhoon-hit eastern city of Tacloban a day earlier.

The crowd — a sea of humanity in colorful rain ponchos spread out across the 60 hectares of parkland and boulevards surrounding it — erupted in shrieks of joy when he drove by, a reflection of the incredible resonance Francis' message about caring for society's most marginal has had in a country where about a quarter of its 100 million people lives in poverty.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS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Fighting. Ukraine leader vows to reassert control

Ukraine's president vowed Sunday to reassert government control over eastern regions as the army unleashed a counter-offensive against Russian-backed separatist fighters vying for command over the airport in the city of Donetsk.

The separatist stronghold was shaken by intense outgoing and incoming artillery fire over the weekend as a bitter battle rages for the air terminal and surrounding areas.

Streets in Donetsk, which was home to a million people before unrest erupted in spring, were completely deserted Sunday and the windows of apartments in the centre were rattled by incessant rocket and mortar fire.

The warring sides exchanged rocket fire along several points in the roughly 350-kilometre front line.

Regional authorities loyal to the government said two children, aged 7 and 16, were killed when a rebel shell hit their home in Vuhlehirsk, a town 75 kilometres northeast of Donetsk.

A little further west, in the rebel-controlled city of Horlivka, two were killed and another 16 injured as a result of rocket attacks, city council secretary Oleg Gurbanov said in a statement. **THE ASSOCIATED PRESS**

Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

France. Police release 3 suspects, question 9

French police have released three female suspects from questioning, but will keep nine other people in custody as part of an anti-terror investigation connected to last week's attacks in Paris that have put Europe on high alert, officials said Sunday.

Amid the heightened European vigilance, a far-right rally in Germany planned for Monday was cancelled over a terrorism threat, Italy said it had expelled nine suspected jihadis since late December and Britain's home secretary called for new action to fight anti-Semitism in the wake of the Paris attacks.

Authorities in Belgium, meanwhile, asked Greek counterparts to extradite a man detained in Greece a day earlier in connection with a probe of a suspected plot to kill police in Belgium. On Thursday, Belgian police led a vast anti-terrorism sweep in and around Brussels and in eastern Verviers, which left two suspects dead. Authorities cited an imminent threat.

Police in at least four European countries arrested dozens of suspects in recent days in an anti-terrorism crackdown sparked by last week's bloody rampage in and around Paris. Brothers Said and Cherif Kouachi and their friend, Amedy Coulibaly, killed 17 people at the satirical newspaper Charlie Hebdo, a kosher grocery and elsewhere. **THE ASSOCIATED PRESS**

Ferguson

Black Congress members push for federal reform

Leading black members of Congress took to a church pulpit in Ferguson, Missouri, on Sunday to trace a direct link from slain civil rights leader Martin Luther King Jr.'s legacy to the fight for criminal justice reform after recent fatal police shootings across the U.S.

Rep. William Lacy Clay Jr. spoke to parishioners at Wellspring United Methodist Church, just blocks from where violent protests broke out after a white Ferguson police officer shot an unarmed black man, 18-year-old Michael Brown, and again after a grand jury declined to indict the officer. **THE ASSOCIATED PRESS**

Ireland

Irish Cabinet member tells nation he's gay

A senior Cabinet minister in Ireland says he's gay, becoming the first openly homosexual government figure in the history of the traditionally conservative Catholic country.

Sunday's announcement on state radio by Health Minister Leo Varadkar received widespread praise for its straightforward honesty. Analysts said his decision was likely to be viewed in hindsight as a landmark of social change in a country that, until 1993, outlawed homosexual acts.

Varadkar said he decided to declare his sexuality in advance of government moves this year to advance gay rights.
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

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Dating site's legal battle with ex-employee ends

Concluded affair. Ashley Madison, former profile writer agree to have their case dismissed

The homepage of the Ashley Madison dating website is displayed on a laptop in Hong Kong in 2013. A legal battle between the Toronto-based website and a former employee has been dismissed by the courts. GETTY IMAGES FILE

The legal battle between a Canadian dating site for married people seeking affairs and a former employee who claimed she was injured typing up fake profiles has come to an end.

A lawsuit and countersuit between the Toronto-based Ashley Madison website and Doriana Silva have been dismissed without costs by the Ontario Superior Court.

The parties agreed to the move after the court threatened to dismiss the suits with costs, noting the cases still hadn't been placed on a trial list more than two years after the initial lawsuit was filed.

Avi Weisman, vice-president and general counsel for Ashley Madison's parent company Avid Life Media, says the company is "very pleased with the outcome."

The dispute began when Silva — who came to Toronto from Brazil — sued her former employer in 2012, alleging she seriously hurt her wrists and forearms typing up 1,000 "fake female profiles" over a few weeks for a new Portuguese-language version of the site.

She sought $20 million for what she called the company's "unjust enrichment" at her expense.

In her claim, Silva said the profiles were meant to lure unsuspecting men to join the dating site.

Ashley Madison denied the allegations and slapped her with a countersuit, claiming she kept confidential documents, including copies of her "work product and training materials."

The countersuit sought to retrieve the documents and obtain $100,000 in damages plus legal costs. The company also argued that the nature of what Silva typed was irrelevant and simply thrown in to tarnish the company's reputation.

Silva claimed she was led to believe writing the profiles was common in the online dating industry and would have otherwise refused. She also claimed she made her superiors aware of her injuries, which she said were ignored.

In the company's statement of defence, Ashley Madison said Silva only mentioned her injuries following the end of her probation period, at which point she was given time off.

The company alleged Silva continually delayed her return, claiming she had since led an active online presence, which it said would not be possible were she seriously injured.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

By the numbers

$20M

Doriana Silva had been seeking $20 million in damages from Ashley Madison for injuries she claims she suffered while writing profiles for the company.

Online retail. U.S. stores a step ahead of Canadian companies: Analysts

Aggressive moves by U.S. retailers to win over Canadian online shoppers with perks such as price-matching and free shipping might be just what Canadian stores need to sharpen their e-commerce offerings.

"I think (Canadian) retailers have been complacent — until now. (But) things are changing with the influx of U.S. competition," says retail analyst Doug Stephens.

Stephens said pressure is building for established retailers such as Hudson's Bay Co. and Canadian Tire to beef up their online presence. The experience companies like Amazon and Walmart have in e-commerce, as well as the speed online-shopping technology is evolving, puts Canadian retailers at a disadvantage.

Retailers have also been held back by legacy computer systems, said Sally Seston, founder of Retail Category Consultants.

"It's a huge expense to make that leap into the technology, to be in the position of where you need to be to add these services," she said.

Quoted

"I think (Canadian) retailers have been complacent."

Doug Stephens, retail analyst

She suggests the goal for Canadian retailers may not be to mirror the U.S., but rather, countries in Europe or even Australia that have similar distribution challenges, including in-store delivery or pickup at lockers available after hours.

Canadian Tire seems to be taking this route, as customers are allowed to pick up items in-store, but the company said e-commerce won't be a meaningful part of its business until 2017.

Hudson's Bay executive chairman Richard Baker emphasized the importance of digital sales. The company's hope is to have digital sales account for 20 per cent of overall sales within the next five years.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

Pressure is building for established retailers such Canadian Tire to beef up their web presence to compete with U.S. companies. LUCAS OLENIUK/TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

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CRA considering online web source to counteract negative news coverage

The Canada Revenue Agency, located in Ottawa, is considering establishing an online information portal. THE CANADIAN PRESS FILE

The Canada Revenue Agency wants to set the record straight when journalists fail to include its upbeat take in their stories.

A new document shows the CRA is considering a web page to post rebuttals to media coverage it doesn't like, and canned responses to popular questions. Officials pitched the idea to CRA commissioner Andrew Treusch in an August 2014 memo.

"The purpose of this briefing note is to follow up on a discussion with your office of actions that might be taken to get our positive messaging out in instances where media coverage does not reflect the content we have provided," it says.

The Canadian Press obtained a copy of the memo under the Access to Information Act.

The document weighed the pros and cons of the idea. The agency sees the advantage of putting out facts and data. On the other hand, it wants to avoid scooping journalists by posting responses to their questions on its website before their stories are published.

Agency officials recommended going forward with the plan, but as of Sunday the section is still under consideration and has not appeared online. THE CANADIAN PRESS

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VOICES

CITY BUDGET TORY'S FIRST REAL TEST

Getting the balance right will be no small task for our new mayor, who has put himself in a difficult position with his campaign promises

TORY'S TORONTO
Matt Elliott

The honeymoon period for Mayor John Tory ends this week, when he runs headlong into the first serious obstacle of his term: the city's 2015 budget.

And I'm pretty jazzed about it.

Sure, I know, the municipal budget doesn't sound exciting, but it matters. All of the stuff we read over the course of the year about the city improving transit, repairing infrastructure or helping the homeless won't add up to anything if the city doesn't actually put money behind those plans through the budget.

Bad budgeting is why we too often hear about big, ambitious city plans that under-deliver — or never happen at all.

The first phase of the budget begins this Tuesday, when city staff unveil their recommendations. This will kick off a lengthy process of public consultations and committee meetings, during which councillors will propose amendments. The whole thing will conclude in March, when council meets to confirm the final version.

This budget looks like a tough one. In contrast to the previous mayor — what was his name again? — who walked into office in 2010 with a $346-million surplus, Tory didn't inherit a windfall. A report released by the city's finance department in the fall projected the 2014 surplus at $98.4 million.

That means Tory doesn't have an easy out. The city operating budget has to be completely balanced by law, so he can't push to carry a deficit like the provincial and federal governments have been known to do. And the available surplus dollars from last year won't be enough to cover the gap as the cost of running the city goes up.

Missing tool

Tory, maybe foolishly, painted himself into a corner during the campaign with tough-talk rhetoric about keeping property tax revenue increases at or below the rate of inflation.

This year's budget gap, which will need to be filled with some combination of taxes, program fee hikes, TTC fare increases, cuts and other savings, was estimated last year at about $452 million, though I suspect the final figure will be a bit lower.

So what's a new mayor to do? Tory, maybe foolishly, painted himself into a corner during the campaign with tough-talk rhetoric about keeping property tax revenue increases at or below the rate of inflation. That takes a really powerful tool out of his toolbox.

That's the thing to watch: How serious is Tory about keeping his election pledge on taxes?

Will he stick with it, even if it means convincing council to balance the budget with things that can disproportionately affect the city's low-income population, such as user fees and TTC fare hikes?

Will he throw caution to the wind and advocate for a greater reliance on revenue from the city's land transfer tax, knowing that even a minor real estate slowdown could leave the city in a serious fiscal crunch?

Or will he, and council, find another way — even if it means breaking a campaign promise?

Your Toronto

Bridging opportunities

Photo submitted by reader Thiago Albuquerque

A cyclist crosses a bridge in Budapest Park along the Toronto waterfront. Photographer Thiago Albuquerque says the image "represents an opportunity," calling bridges and walkways an opportunity to cross adversity with a "privileged point of view." CONTRIBUTED

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Upcoming

Galleries take over Union

Union Station becomes the hub of contemporary art as more than 20 art galleries converge for the Villa Toronto Festival Jan. 16 to 23. The free festival, open to the general public, includes a series of special events throughout the city, including a performance by Ragnar Kjartansson and a talk with Michael Snow. It'll be an opportunity for local and international galleries to use their curatorial experience in interacting with local art communities. GILBERT NGABO/METRO

Get smarter about your smartphone

Ever thought your iPhone 6 Plus may be equipped to do more than just call, text and snap selfies? This one-of-a-kind workshop promises to delve deeper and show you what your smartphone is really capable of. The two-part seminar takes place at Central Eglinton Community Centre on Jan. 22. Registration is $40. More details at centraleglinton.com or contact info@centraleglinton.com/416-392-0511. GILBERT NGABO/METRO

JC Superstar in town

Billed as one of the greatest rock operas ever created after its historic Broadway opening in 1971, the musical is back in town, showing at Hart House and the Lower Ossington Theatre from Jan. 16 to 31. It features the lyrics of Tim Rice and the music of Andrew Lloyd Webber, and is directed by Luke Brown. Tickets can be purchased at uofttix.ca. GILBERT NGABO/METRO

metro

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Gossip

NED EHRBAR

METRO'S TAKE ON THE WORLD OF CELEBRITIES

Mariah Carey ALL PHOTOS GETTY IMAGES EXCEPT WHERE NOTED

Curvy model gives the skinny on the weight of women in Hollywood

Plus-size model Ashley Graham has a bone to pick with Hollywood about how definitions of size have changed.

"You girls don't have much to look at. Curvy women are not on the covers of magazines, they're not talked about on social media as much as other celebrities," Graham writes in an essay for Net-A-Porter's The Edit. "Jennifer Lawrence is the media's poster girl for curves — she's tiny!"

Wait, who are these people calling Jennifer Lawrence a big girl, and how do I shut them up? Because come on.

Ashley Graham

Fox in talks to re-open the X-Files

Fox is in talks with David Duchovny and Gillian Anderson to bring back The X-Files for a limited series. CONTRIBUTED

It turns out that Fox had such a good time bringing 24 back for a limited series last year that they're now eager to dip into other long-since-ended favourites for similar treatment. Up first? The X-Files, Fox chairman Gary Newman confirmed to the Television Critics Association over the weekend.

And that's not all. Apparently the network is already talking to stars David Duchovny and Gillian Anderson to find a schedule that works for them to return. Because, as we learned with the last two seasons of the original show, it just doesn't work without Mulder and Scully.

Nick is Wild 'N Out as he files for divorce from Mimi

Nick Cannon

It looks like any hopes of reconciliation between Mariah Carey and Nick Cannon have been dashed, as TMZ reports that Cannon has "quietly" filed for divorce last month.

The move comes just 10 days after Carey was late to a Christmas tree-lighting ceremony, forcing her to sing live and unprepared. Sources say her tardiness was caused by phone calls with her lawyers hashing out the terms of the divorce, as Carey is keen to keep Cannon out of her upcoming big-ticket residency series in Las Vegas.

Hey, remember last April when divorce rumours first started to swirl and Cannon vehemently denied them?

Oh well.

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Mark Zuckerberg is trying to get facebook users reading more than just their user feed. GETTY IMAGES

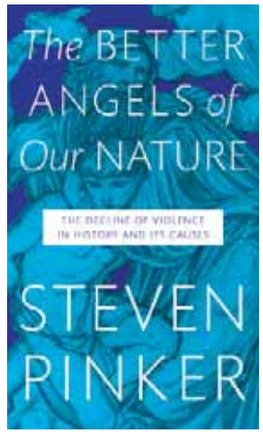
Zuckerbook club's next pick tackles timely theme

Reading list. Facebook CEO chooses 2011 book that contends violence has decreased in modern times

Mark Zuckerberg has made his next book club pick a release he considers especially timely after the recent terrorist attacks in Paris.

The Facebook CEO announced Saturday he would take on Steven Pinker's The Better Angels of Our Nature, a widely discussed and occasionally criticized 2011 book that contends violence has decreased in modern times and the world has become more humane. Zuckerberg posted the news on his Facebook page and on a community page he set up for his club, A Year of Books.

"Recent events might make it seem like violence and terrorism are more common than ever, so it's worth understanding that all violence — even terrorism — is actually decreasing over time. If we understand how we are achieving this, we can continue our path towards peace," Zuckerberg wrote. "A few people I trust have told me this is the best book they've ever read."



Among the book's admirers is Microsoft founder Bill Gates, who has called it his "favourite book of the last decade" and "a long but profound look at the reduction in violence and discrimination over time."

Two weeks ago, Zuckerberg declared he would read a new book every other week in 2015, and he invited his millions of Facebook friends to join him and participate in an online discussion. His first choice, Moises Naim's The End of Power, quickly became a bestseller on Amazon.com and elsewhere. But only 162 comments appear for last week's book club chat held on the community page, which has more than 260,000 likes.

Pinker, 60, is a leading psychologist, linguist and cognitive scientist who teaches at Harvard University and has written several popular books, two of which, The Blank Slate and How the Mind Works, were finalists for the Pulitzer Prize. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

David Mitchell's 280-tweet short story to be published as novel Slade House

Twitter novel. What began as an online story called The Right Sort has grown into a five-part book that will debut in print this October

It started life as a short story on social media, but Slade House is now set for publication in October 2015, the month in which its fictional conclusion takes place.

Mitchell had originally distributed The Right Sort as a collection of 280 tweets, commencing on July 14, 2014.

But, as explained in a joint statement with publisher Sceptre, it "quickly acquired a life of its own" as "scenes grew, bred and sprouted new scenes."

Eventually, The Right Sort became the first of a five-part novel that will see the light of day as Slade House.

With Mitchell's readers accustomed to seeing new work arrive every two years, and The Bone Clocks released only last September, the new work breaks with established convention.

Author David Mitchell AFP

But, inhabiting the same fictional world as his most recent novel, a swift production process for Slade House is not necessarily inappropriate, with Sceptre teasing the appearance of a character "who might be a shade familiar from The Bone Clocks."

"Slade House is on a shorter scale than his major novels, but is every bit as enthralling and inventive," said Sceptre publishing director Carol Welch, describing it as "a taut, spine-chilling, intricately woven, reality-warping tale that begins in 1979 and comes to its electrifying conclusion on October 31st, 2015." AFP

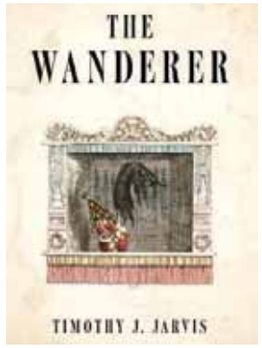
Online tale. Choose-your-own adventure genre finds new life

Survival story Wanderer invites players to decide what happens next as they follow a snaking path of linked Twitter accounts.

Starting out with a January 11 tweet from @wnd_go, the brief adventure weaves its way across a number of accounts, some approaching seven years of age. Locations attached to different accounts point towards the Cross Bones graveyard in central London, a leafy street near Earl's Court, and Scotland's northeast city Aberdeen.

Those who successfully navigate the sequence of life-or-death decisions are led to the Amazon page for The Wanderer, a 2014 novel from London-based author Timothy J. Jarvis.

The bread crumb trail on Twitter was devised by literary web developer Terence Eden, who told blastr.com that his text game was inspired by Jarvis's debut novel. "It's really hard to be creepy in 140 characters! I had to make extensive use of exophoric references and hope that the reader would fill in the blanks!" he said. AFP



Game awards

Shadow of Mordor leads DICE Awards nominations

Middle-Earth: Shadow of Mordor has climbed to the DICE Awards summit with nine nominations, including those for Outstanding Innovation and Game of the Year. On the surface another tie-in with the Lord of the Rings franchise, and initially received as an Assassin's Creed clone for similarities in its main character's walking animation, Shadow of Mordor became a firm favorite with a host of reviewers and players following its fall release. AFP

Evan Fong's VanossGaming channel is about to crack the Top 25 list for most YouTube subscribers. THE CANADIAN PRESS

Toronto video gamer a YouTube sensation

Digital trends. Videos of Evan Fong playing games and chatting with friends now have 11 million subscribers and earn him about $360,000 per month

Twenty-two-year-old Toronto native Evan Fong is about to crack the Top 25 list for the most YouTube subscribers, passing Ellen DeGeneres and Justin Bieber. And he'll do it by playing video games.

Approaching 11 million subscribers and 2 billion views, Fong's YouTube channel VanossGaming is part of a massive trend: a subculture of young people who are tuning out of TV and instead going online to watch people play video games and chat.

A source with knowledge of YouTube's payment structure estimated Fong is making about $360,000 per month.

"If you're really into gaming, there's not really anything on TV," says Fong, who gets up to 14 million views daily.

"Viewers really like the authentic type of content from regular people just playing games, because they can relate to that. I think that's a huge reason why people prefer to watch YouTube videos. It really is a totally different experience and it's something you can't find on TV."

In a typical video, Fong and a group of friends chat, laugh and make jokes over gameplay, from popular titles such as Grand Theft Auto V or Call of Duty: World at War.

Fong, who dropped out of university in his second year as his YouTube channel began exploding in popularity, says he never expected to get paid to play video games.

He launched his channel in 2011 but didn't spend much time on it at first. He was focused on playing junior hockey and chasing a U.S. scholarship.

"In the early days, I remember maybe 1,000 views was something that would be off the charts for me," he recalls. "It took, I would say, about a good year and a half (to start becoming popular). It started really slow and I didn't take it really seriously. It wasn't something that I strived to do to the best of my ability like I do now."

When his hockey dreams didn't pan out he went to school full time. His parents were understandably concerned as his YouTube channel stole more and more time from his university studies.

"It was something they weren't always fully supportive of. Even though there's a lot of potential for somebody starting a YouTube channel it's obviously not a guaranteed path. They just basically wanted to make sure I was still taking school seriously.

"But I was very conservative. I never wanted to stop university and risk that opportunity. So what I did was, I made sure I was successful enough on YouTube before I (dropped out). I probably stopped school a lot later than most full-time YouTubers did."

Although his channel's growth is still meteoric, Fong is level-headed enough to know it could stall, or crash, at any time.

"Anything on the Internet can blow up and go away," he says. "You're only as good as your last video on YouTube."

THE CANADIAN PRESS

Massive fan base

The gaming video trend was recently lampooned in a South Park episode, which featured Swedish YouTuber Felix Kjellberg, who uses the alias PewDiePie. He has the most-viewed channel on YouTube. "It's a very good testament to how viewing habits have changed for younger generations," says Joshua Cohen, founder of industry news outlet Tubefilter.com. "Gamers have developed one of the most massive and ardent fan bases in the world on YouTube. It's pretty impressive."

Patton Oswalt gets introspective, smartphone game gets strangely shadowy, and Nintendo DS gets better at 3D gaming

MIND THE APP
Kris Abel
@RealKrisAbel
scene@metronews.ca

Ebooks

Silver Screen Fiend

By. Patton Oswalt

Kindle/iBooks/Kobo

For four years, Patton compulsively watched art-house films, seeking guidance to his artistic ambitions. Now reflecting on his immaturity, he uses lists of movies, both real and imagined, along with calendars tied to much-loved indie theatres, to question where his real career lessons came from.

App

Shadowmatic

iPhone/iPad
$3.49

In this tricky but relaxing puzzle game, you must flip abstract 3D sculptures about until they cast the perfect, recognizable shadow. It's a beautiful test of your spatial problem-solving skills.

Video game

Name. Nintendo 3DS XL

$230

Rated. Ages 7+

Tweaked for a larger screen, this glasses-free 3D system needs even less adjustment, while a new controller makes it easier to look and walk around in 3D worlds. The promise is that a faster processor and amiibo connectivity will lead to console-quality games but, for now, only those with really older systems should upgrade.

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Anderson prefers Stella role to Scully

Netflix. The Fall star talks Jamie Dornan, complex female sleuths and swimming

Gillian Anderson GETTY IMAGES

There's agent Dana Scully of The X-Files and Blanche Dubois in A Streetcar Named Desire. Also Lily Bart in The House of Mirth, with a little Bedelia du Maurier, aka, Hannibal Lecter's shrink, thrown in.

Of all the period costumes and unraveling of twisted psyches that Gillian Anderson has taken on, she likes her Stella Gibson the most. Gibson being the enigmatic detective superintendent sent from London to Northern Ireland on the critically acclaimed serial-killer series The Fall, a.k.a. the thing Jamie Dornan finds himself in the middle of as Fifty Shades of Grey madness begins to take a tighter hold.

Anderson had little to say about Dornan in a recent interview, begging off because the two didn't physically work with each other on The Fall during the first season. They do a little the second time around as Dornan's woman-killer, ex-family man Paul Spector, goes on the run.

Netflix drops the second season of the taut, Belfast-set drama Friday.

"Jamie Dornan wasn't Mr. Fifty Shades of Grey" when the slow-paced, cat-and-mouse show began on Irish television and the BBC, Anderson said. "Jamie Dornan was cast after having done very little, and we cast him before Fifty Shades of Grey, so that's what our starting point was. This was a fresh face of somebody who was clearly a very good actor."

The 46-year-old Anderson, who has won awards for both stage and screen work, owes her early success to Scully, but considers Gibson the most interesting on her resume, with little-to-no backstory provided for the character during the first five-episode season.

"The script for The Fall was very different than anything I've read before, and I felt that Stella was about as complex a character as I ever encountered," she said.

"That appeals to me. Even after the second season, after we do get hints here and there, maybe bits of her past, you're still asking the question who is she and what makes her tick?"

One thing that keeps Gibson going is lap swimming. Anderson hit the pool herself the first season but required a body double for the second.

"I don't generally enjoy it," Anderson said of Gibson's pool obsession. "But the day that we shot all those scenes I thought this is OK, I like this. I could maybe do this on a regular basis, and then between that point and the time that we shot the second season I developed what's called a frozen shoulder."

As for how television's female crime fighters have changed over the years since the X-Files debuted, Anderson doesn't really know. "I don't watch TV myself," she said. "I seriously don't know how people find the time. ... I have a lot on my plate and when I'm (on) airplanes, I'm writing. I'm more likely to choose a film if I do make that time for myself."

In addition to three kids, Anderson has given birth to A Vision of Fire, the first of a science fiction book trilogy co-written with Jeff Rovin. And she's been working "for about 100 years" on a screen adaptation of Elizabeth Rosner's debut novel, The Speed of Light, about a brother and sister dealing with their father's secret past.

She's now also one of the executive producers on The Fall, which saw the exit of director Jakob Verbruggen. Season 2 duties fell to creator Allan Cubitt. Anderson said she can "pretty much" promise a third season. With Dornan?

"We don't know that he's gonna follow us into a third season," she said.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Jamie Dornan

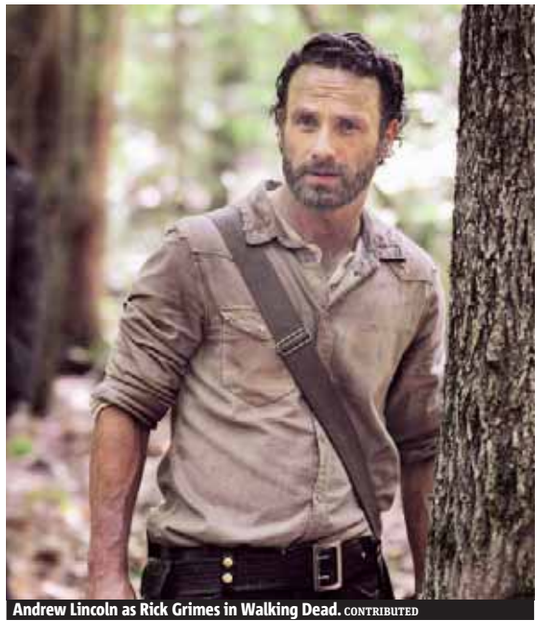
"We cast him before Fifty Shades of Grey.... This was a fresh face of somebody who was clearly a very good actor."

Gillian Anderson, speaking of her costar in The Fall

Cult television

So, Laura Palmer is dead. Pfft. Give her a reboot, too!

Entertainment website HitFix is looking forward to the Twin Peaks reboot and has a list of the 25 characters that should be brought back. Of course, they want Laura Palmer (played by Sheryl Lee) to return — even if she's dead. "Can you imagine Twin Peaks without Laura Palmer? The bruised beauty's murder may have been solved, but she is the crux of David Lynch and Mark Frost's macabre vision. ...it's up to the creators to figure out how to work Sheryl Lee into the follow-up series — and I trust they'll find a way." THE ASSOCIATED PRESS


Andrew Lincoln as Rick Grimes in Walking Dead. CONTRIBUTED

TV buzz. Walking Dead spinoff to be familiar but different — like zombies

With the spinoff for The Walking Dead ready to go into production, show creator Robert Kirkman is revealing a few clues about the new zombie series.

He says it'll be kind of the same and yet "startlingly different."

"I will say that this is going to be a show about family," Kirkman tells Entertainment Weekly.

"But it's going to be a show about a different type of family that we haven't explored in The Walking Dead thus far. So what we're trying to do with the Walking Dead spinoff is keep the story as familiar as possible for people that love The Walking Dead ... but at the same time we'll want to tell these stories in a completely different way with completely different people in a completely different setting that's going to make for a fundamentally different show."

Kirkman brought in a new director that hasn't previously worked with the Walking Dead team to give the spinoff its own identity.

"He hasn't directed The Walking Dead," says Kirkman of Adam Davidson. "So that is one way that we're trying to bring a new directing style to the show — to bring in new visual language to this show."

THE CANADIAN PRESS

DVD review

The Drop

Director. Michael R. Roskam

Stars. Tom Hardy, Noomi Rapace, James Gandolfini

This underworld drama boasts the final major screen performance by James Gandolfini, who died in 2013. He's spot-on as Marv, the owner of the seedy Brooklyn bar where the film's title happens on a regular basis: fat envelopes of gangster loot are slid into a safe beneath the beer taps.

But it's not Gandolfini who defines this slight yet compelling English-language debut by Belgian director Michael R. Roskam. That honour goes to Tom Hardy, a fabulous chameleon who almost vanishes beneath the worried brow of Bob, The Drop's narrator and protagonist. When Bob discovers an abused and injured pit bull, he also finds a mystery woman named Nadia (Noomi Rapace), who at first tries to keep her distance. Enter a dangerous third party: Nadia's unstable ex-beau Eric (Matthias Schoenaerts).

The Drop is steeped in a simmering underworld familiar to fans of late directors Sidney Lumet and Arthur Penn, and stripped of primary colours like their 70s cinema classics.

Tusk

Director. Kevin Smith

Stars. Justin Long

Neither fish nor fowl in its ludicrous tale of an arrogant Yankee podcaster (Justin Long) being turned into a walrus by a deranged Canuck seafarer (Michael Parks), Kevin Smith's Midnight Madness misfire flip-flops between bad comedy and dumb horror. The horror might have worked if Smith kept it to one good reveal of the Frankenwalrus, which actually is pretty creepy. But "excess" is Smith's middle name, so the show goes on . . . and on. PETER HOWELL

Know where your money goes

Spending journal. Get a pen and notebook, and start writing down what you spend — no fancy app required

GAIL VAZ-OXLADE
Gail blogs daily at gailvazoxlade.com

In your spending journal, you'll note when you take cash out of the bank, and what you spend the cash on. ISTOCK

Once you start keeping track of where your money goes using a spending journal, you will be surprised at how often you buy coffee, gum, a mid-afternoon snack. You will be astonished at how often you go into shoe stores, tool stores and restaurants. Your spending journal will make you aware of where your money is going.

If you don't want to change how you're managing your money, you also probably don't care about how not paying attention affects you. Hey, enjoy your life. Just don't whine if down the road things don't turn out as you thought they would. You know the saying: "Insanity is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results."

If you're determined to know what you're doing with your money, regardless of how uncomfortable it makes you initially, get yourself a notebook and a pen. That's your spending journal. No fancy app required. No special tools needed. A pen and a notebook is all it takes.

Write your current bank balance at the top of the first page. Every time you spend a cent, deduct it from the balance in your journal. It doesn't matter if you're spending it using cash, a debit card, a credit card, cheques, or a bank transfer. Every penny gets tracked. (If you take cash out of the bank, you'll deduct the withdrawal and leave some space in your journal to note what you spent the cash on. Don't cheat!)

This will help you figure out which expenses are necessary and which are, well, not so much.

When you get money, add it into your spending journal. This could be a paycheque, government cheques or a refund of medical expenses. Every penny that comes in goes into the spending journal. If you make money in cash, you must enter that too. Slipping the cash into your pocket and spending it willy-nilly is cheating.

If you've been unconscious about your money for quite some time, it's likely going to take a bit of time to develop some new habits. Don't get impatient with yourself. Impatience will only distract you from the task at hand. You have, after all, a lot to learn.

You have to:

- distinguish between "needs" and "wants;"
- communicate with your friends and family about your new awakening and the changes you'll be making;
- recognize the impact marketing and advertising has on you, and resolve not to be influenced;
- create a balanced budget and track your expenses on a daily or weekly basis;
- recognize the importance of saving both for emergencies and for the long term;
- do the hard work it will take to come up with a debt repayment plan and then execute that plan;
- learn to not only see today's immediate needs, but plan for things you will need and want in the future;
- lead by example; show your children how to take charge of their money so they don't end up making the same mistakes you did;
- be willing to seek help if you feel overwhelmed or lost along the way.

Change is never easy. Most people hate change. There will be times when you fall off the rails. You'll lose track of a receipt and kick yourself. You'll skip the comparison-shopping because you just don't have time. Or you buy something that's not in your budget because, well, you just do. You're bound to make mistakes. The key is to right your rocky boat quickly to get back on track.

If you're still back at, "But Gail, who has time for this?" listen to me. I do. I track my money and stay conscious about what I'm doing with it. That's why I had enough money to walk away from television when I was asked to compromise my integrity. You can't have money if you aren't prepared to pay attention to it.

You drag your sorry butt out of bed come rain, snow, sickness or exhaustion. You bust said butt to make money so you can have a life. Shouldn't you spend at least two hours a month figuring out where that money is going?

Yup, that's all it'll add up to. Every time you buy anything, ask for a receipt and then add the info to your spending journal that night. It could take four to six weeks for the habit to really take hold. Less if you're flexible. More if you're a stubborn dog.

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Just do it

- People often assume that I'm good with money because I like doing all the tracking I talk about. Are you crazy? Who wants to do that? It's not a matter of like or not like. I'm not so keen on cleaning my toilets and hauling out the garbage either, but I do it. There are days when I don't want to collect receipts or write in my spending journal, when I just can't be bothered. But if I'm not taking care of my money, who will?

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Career advice every millennial needs to hear

Work. Take hold of your employment destiny by taking heed of these important tips

MARIANNE HAYES
Metro in New York City

It's estimated Millenials will make up 75 per cent of the workforce by 2025. ISTOCK

Millennials are quickly making up a huge chunk of the workforce. Today many are still in entry-level roles, which makes now the perfect time to start strategizing future career growth.

"You've really got to be the CEO of your own career," says millennial workplace expert Lindsey Pollak.

How exactly do you do that? Pollak, the New York Times bestselling author of Becoming the Boss is here to tell you.

Network, network, network

It may sound obvious, but the importance of networking cannot be overstated. This especially holds true for millennials — many of whom are opting for the freelance life as opposed to traditional 9-to-5s. (According to a 2013 Millennial Branding report, nearly half of all millennials value workplace flexibility over pay.) The truth is that freelancing/consulting/whatever you want to call it is a fast-growing trend among Gen Y-ers.

"I think the economy has changed, particularly since the Great Recession, and it's harder to get a full-time job with benefits," says Pollak. "I also think a lot of millennials aren't as attracted to full-time, paid employment. They're interested in side gigs, freelancing, and entrepreneurship in addition to, or instead of, what we've considered traditional employment."

If you're even partially self-employed, which many millennials are, networking is critical to drumming up business.

Pollak says becoming active in professional associations and alumni groups can open the door for establishing new contacts.

Seek creative leadership roles

Millennials are a confident bunch. According to Pollak, most members of this generation are itching to move up the ladder — sometimes way faster than their companies are willing (or able) to promote them. One 2014 millennial leadership survey from The Hartford found that 83 per cent of millennials already feel like leaders, whether they're in leadership positions or not.

If you're currently employed within a company, Pollak advises getting as involved as you can. "It's no longer enough to just put your head down and do the work," she says. "You've also got to go to meetings, sign up for mentoring, join an internal network within your company, and volunteer for projects and internal assignments."

Be sure to look for leadership roles outside of your company as well. This could include working with nonprofits or local community groups.

These are the things that'll beef up your resume and LinkedIn profile. They'll also satisfy your desire to lead.

In case of emergency

Don't blow off the value of insurance

- Freelancing certainly doesn't come with a cushy benefits package. And even if you work for a company, many employers are scaling back on the types of benefits they offer. Pollak advises all millennials to think ahead when it comes to disability and life insurance.
- "Disability insurance will keep a paycheck coming in if you're not able to work because of an off-the-job injury or illness," she says. "And life insurance is something a lot of millennials just don't think about. But if, for example, your parents co-signed your student loans that you're still paying back and something happens to you, your parents would still be responsible for them."

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How to keep work from controlling your life

Career. It's important to maintain an existence outside of your nine-to-five

EMILY LAURENCE
Metro in New York City

Catching up on an office project from the comfort of your bed does not count as leisure time. ISTOCK

Chances are, even if you love your job, you want your life to be more than just work, work, work. But instead of using off-hours to pursue a new hobby, many either don't have the energy or are still "on," responding to constant emails.

"Technology has freed us up in many ways, but at the same time it's imprisoned us. It's very difficult to create boundaries," says Brigid Schulte, author of Overwhelmed: Work, Love and Play When No One Has Time.

To help create boundaries, Schulte advises setting aside a certain time each day to check email and that's it. She also says that leaving work "on time" won't keep you from getting ahead. "The way you get ahead is [simply] to do really great work," she says.

The sad thing is, according to leisure researcher Roger Mannell, even when people have a block of time free, they don't know what to do with it. That leads to mindlessly watching TV, messing around on your phone and not doing anything that leaves you feeling satisfied with how you used your time.

"There is no rule of thumb like 'x' amount of leisure time makes you feel great," Schulte says. "Control and choice are the keys."

What work-life balance looks like

Craig Nevill-Manning has a demanding job as an engineering director at Google, building features like their Crisis Response organization and improving the search engine's functions. But for years, he wanted to pursue another interest of his in his off-time: opening up a café.

He opened Happy Bones café and has struck a balance between working full-time and tending to his passion project on the side.

"I have great partners, including my wife, and a great café manager," he tells us. "And at Google, we encourage employees to have a good work-life balance."

Surefire ways to spark career creativity

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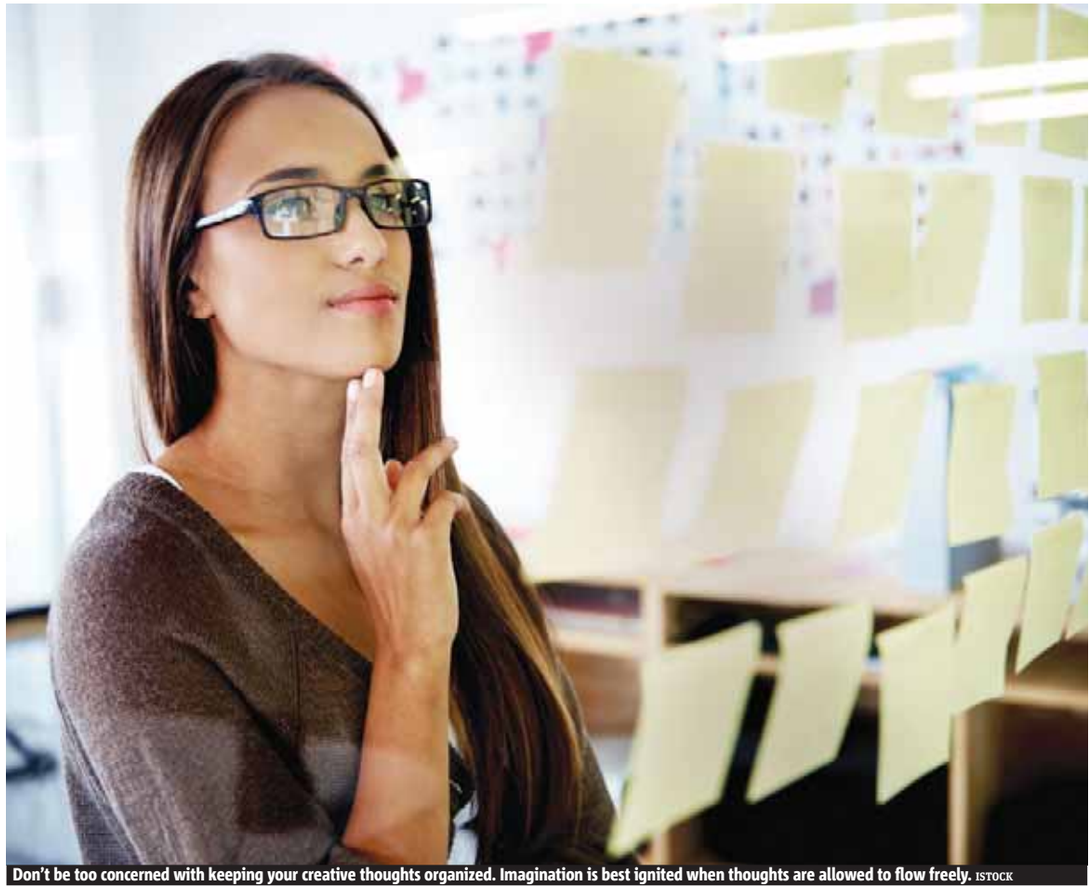
MARIANNE HAYES
Metro in New York City



Don't be too concerned with keeping your creative thoughts organized. Imagination is best ignited when thoughts are allowed to flow freely. ISTOCK

Whether you're a songwriter or a business executive, creativity goes a long way when it comes to success. On the flip side, creative slumps can be frustrating enough to make us give up on a task altogether.

Creativity, innovation and leadership expert Michael J. Gelb says that one of the biggest misconceptions people have is that they aren't creative. "We have to give up the idea that creativity is some sort of magic that some people have and others don't," he says.

According to Gelb, author of Creativity on Demand, scores on creativity tests go up 25 per cent when people change their self-concept from "I'm not creative" to "I might be creative."

Looking to get your creative juices flowing? Read on for some of Gelb's top tips for nurturing your innovative side.

Generate first, organize later

In school, we're typically taught to put all of our ideas into outlines. But Gelb says that outlining actually slows down creative thinking.

"You want to generate your ideas in a free-flowing, nonlinear, playful, exploratory way," he says.

Gelb touts the benefits of a brainstorming approach called mind-mapping, which uses lines, images, colours and symbols to help generate original ideas.

Stream of consciousness writing is another tool for jump-starting the creative process. The gist of this technique is to write as fast as you can without censoring or editing yourself in any way.

"Think of lots of ideas, and go for playful, absurd and ridiculous ideas," Gelb says.

Embrace play

One of the most powerful things you can do to boost creativity is to make time for fun. "Play and humour liberate your creativity, and over-seriousness shuts it off," says Gelb.

The idea isn't exactly novel. (Experts have been exploring the positive effects of humour for years.) But that doesn't make it any less effective.

Laughter gets oxytocin rushing through your system, which supports relaxation and confidence. In other words, it sets the stage for more creative, out-of-the-box thinking.

"When you're able to think of non-habitual ideas, you get your brain outside of habitual pathways — and that's where creativity is going to come," says Gelb.

There's a growing body of research suggesting that the more you laugh, the more likely you are to experience those golden "aha" moments.

Think about it

"When you're able to think of non-habitual ideas, you get your brain outside of habitual pathways — and that's where creativity is going to come."

Michael J. Gelb
Creativity, innovation and leadership expert

Take a break

Believe it or not, taking a break is a powerful step in the creative process.

It makes sense given that our best ideas rarely come while sitting in our cubicles. Instead, Gelb encourages folks to incorporate breaks into their regular routines.

"Recognize that the break is as important as the concentrated work," he says.

While brainstorming stimulates your mind outside of habitual pathways (which is definitely key), breakthroughs don't typically come until you shift back into a more relaxed brainwave state. This is why some of our best ideas spark to life during mindless activities, like taking a shower or driving to the supermarket. According to a 2012 New York Times report, skipping breaks can also lead to stress and exhaustion.

"Work with great intensity and focus, and then make taking a break an integral part of your thinking, planning, and problem solving," says Gelb.

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Meatloaf gets an Italian-inspired upgrade

Dinner. Eggplant Meatloaf brings the well-loved flavours of tomato sauce and Parmesan cheese to the classic dish

ROSE REISMAN
For more, visit rosereisman.com or follow her on twitter @rosereisman

Meatloaf is an all-time family favourite recipe.

If you want to take this ordinary weeknight meal to different heights, try my updated version. I take a version of Eggplant Parmesan, serve it overtop the meatloaf and cover it with cheese. It's moist, delicious and healthy.

Directions

1. Preheat the oven to 400 F. Spray a 9x9 inch (square) pan with vegetable oil.

2. To make the meatloaf, combine the ground beef, egg, barbecue sauce, bread crumbs, green onions, garlic, basil and salt and pepper in a bowl. Pat into square pan and spread half a cup of the tomato sauce over top (saving the 1/4 cup remaining for the eggplant.)

3. Meanwhile, prepare the eggplant. Whisk the egg with the water in a small bowl. Combine the bread crumbs, parsley and Parmesan on a plate, mixing well. Dip the eggplant in the egg mixture, then coat with the bread crumb mixture. Place on a baking sheet sprayed with vegetable oil.

4. Bake both the eggplant and meatloaf for approximately 15 to 20 minutes. The beef should reach 165 F and the eggplant should be browned.

5. Assembly: Place the eggplant slices overtop of the meatloaf. Spread the remaining 1/4 cup tomato sauce over the baked eggplant slices. Sprinkle with the mozzarella cheese. Bake the Eggplant Meatloaf for 5 minutes or until the cheese is melted.

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Nutritional information

Per serving

- **Calories.** 347
- **Carbohydrates.** 30 g
- **Fibre.** 2 g
- **Protein.** 34 g
- **Total fat.** 12 g
- **Saturated fat.** 5.2 g
- **Cholesterol.** 158 mg
- **Sodium.** 870 mg

This recipe serves four. ROSE REISMAN

Ingredients

Meatloaf
- 16 oz (1 lb) extra-lean ground beef
- 1 egg
- 1/3 cup barbecue sauce (or ketchup)
- 1/3 cup seasoned dry bread crumbs
- 1/4 cup finely diced green onions
- 1 1/2 tsp crushed garlic
- 1/2 tsp dried basil leaves
- pinch of salt and pepper
- 3/4 cup tomato sauce

Eggplant
- 1 egg
- 2 tbsp water or 2% milk
- 3/4 cup seasoned dry bread crumbs
- 3 tbsp chopped fresh parsley
- 3 tbsp grated Parmesan cheese (3/4 oz)
- 6 crosswise slices of eggplant, skin on, approximately 1/2-inch thick
- 2 tsp vegetable oil
- 1/2 cup shredded part-skim mozzarella cheese (1 1/2 oz)

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Fun, games help develop literacy

Board games, story time, and making a recipe together are all great ways to help your children build their literacy skills, as well as to improve your own, says Gillian Mason, president, ABC Life Literacy Canada.

Literacy is a lot more than just reading and writing.

"From the moment you wake up, to the moment you go to bed, you use literacy skills to help decode the world in such a way that you can make better choices and better understand those choices," Mason says.

"In the long run, it's about being a functional member of society."

Research has shown that literacy development is most important during our formative years, especially early childhood.

"When parents interact with their children in positive ways around learning, the literacy skills start to develop naturally," says Kim Chung, program director, Centre for Family Literacy in Edmonton.

The Centre for Family Literacy helps parents gain confidence in their own skills.

"It's about supporting parents supporting children because parents are really a child's first teacher," Chung says.

Learning can happen in a lot of circumstances, Chung says. "But if learning happens naturally while you're doing something fun with your family and using all of your senses, it seems to be more potent."

Many parents don't appreciate that the activities they do every day with their children provide huge learning opportunities, Mason says.

"Reading, singing, cooking, playing games, storytelling, and drawing together are great ways to support learning."

What's important is that you process the information and interact with your child. For example, talk about words and the alphabet when you pass street signs, calculate the change when buying an ice cream cone, and read the recipe out loud while gathering the ingredients.

Family Literacy Fun is a program that provides activities, including songs, rhymes, and interactive play, to encourage families to learn together in a warm and enjoyable environment. It was created by ABC Life Literacy Canada and Natrel to help parents engage in fun activities with their children.

CONTRIBUTED

CONTRIBUTED

"We are proud to help promote literacy through fun-filled activities so families can learn and grow together," says Caroline Losson, vice-president, marketing, Natrel.

More than 35,000 copies of the Family Literacy Fun activity book have been distributed to families through literacy and learning centres across Ontario, Quebec and British Columbia. In addition, more than 18,000 resources have been downloaded from the website.

"What's important to know is that the more you engage in these types of activities with a child the stronger your own skills become," Mason says.

For more, visit FamilyLiteracyFun.ca and lireetjouerenfamille.ca.

MAKE LEARNING ENJOYABLE

Here are five activities from the Family Literacy Fun booklet to do with children that promote literacy skills.

1 ***YOGA.*** Yoga helps children focus and learn. For the lion pose, kneel on your shins, hands in front, chest to your thighs. Push up on hands and knees, look up to the sky, and "roar."

2 ***MAKE APPLE PANCAKES.*** Read the recipe and measure out ingredients using your literacy skills.

3 ***LEARN SIGN LANGUAGE.*** Signing helps language development. To sign milk, place your hand in front of your body, palm facing in. Squeeze your hand into a fist, relax and squeeze again.

4 ***BUILD A PAPER AIRPLANE.*** Use a piece of paper and follow folding instructions to build your own airplane.

5 ***RACE TO LITERACY GAME.*** Players roll the dice, move that many spaces and then say the letter they land on out loud, as well as a word with which it starts.

Visit FamilyLiteracyFun.ca and lireetjouerenfamille.ca for more.

SPORTS 4

Champs heading back to Super Bowl

NFL playoffs.
Seahawks overcome 16-point deficit to edge Green Bay in instant-classic thriller

The Seahawks' Michael Bennett celebrates with Russell Wilson after their NFC championship win over the Green Bay Packers on Sunday in Seattle. RONALD MARTINEZ/GETTY IMAGES

Never doubt the resilience of the Seattle Seahawks.

Plagued by turnovers and outplayed much of Sunday by Green Bay, the Seahawks staged an improbable comeback and beat the Packers 28-22 in overtime. Russell Wilson, who struggled until the final minutes, hit Jermaine Kearse for a 35-yard touchdown 3:19 into the extra period to end the game.

The Seahawks became the first defending champion to make the Super Bowl in 10 years.

Seattle (14-4) trailed 19-7 with about four minutes remaining and had been ineffective on offence all game. Wilson finally put a drive together with passes to Doug Baldwin and Marshawn Lynch — initially ruled a touchdown but called back because he stepped out of bounds. Wilson finished with a one-yard scoring run to cut the lead to 19-14 with 2:09 left.

The onside kick went high to Packers tight end Brandon Bostick, but he couldn't gather it, and Seattle's Chris Matthews recovered at the 50. The crowd, which had been quiet since falling behind 16-0, came alive and Lynch sped and powered his way to a 24-yard TD run. On the two-point conversion, Wilson - about to be sacked - threw a desperate pass hauled in by Luke Willson to make it 22-19 with 1:25 remaining.

NFC championship

28	22
Seahawks	Packers

Aaron Rodgers, limping on an injured calf, calmly led the Packers (13-5) down the field to set up Mason Crosby's fifth field goal, a 48-yarder with 14 seconds to go.

That forced overtime.

Then Wilson and Kearse struck, with Kearse — the target on all four of Wilson's interceptions — beating Tramon Williams on the winning pass. Kearse caught the winning score in last year's conference title win over San Francisco, too.

"Just making the plays at the end and keep believing," said Wilson, who was overwhelmed and sobbing after the game. "There was no doubt ... we had no doubt as a team."

Until the final minutes, there seemed to be no doubt the Packers were headed to the big game Feb. 1 in Glendale, Arizona. Despite All-Pro Rodgers' injured calf, Green Bay and its overlooked defence was carrying the day.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Sent packing

"It's going to be a missed opportunity that I'll probably think about for the rest of my career."

Green Bay Packers quarterback Aaron Rodgers

AFC championship

Pats' Brady, Blount bowl over Colts

Tom Brady threw for three touchdowns and LeGarrette Blount ran in three more on Sunday to lead the New England Patriots into the Super Bowl with a 45-7 victory over the Indianapolis Colts.

The Patriots won their eighth AFC championship — their sixth under Brady and coach Bill Belichick. They will play the Seattle Seahawks in the Super Bowl in Glendale, Arizona, on Feb. 1.

New England (14-4) opened a 14-point lead in the first half and then broke it open in a driving rain with three third-quarter touchdowns and another to start the fourth. That made it the second-most lopsided game in AFC championship history.

Brady completed 23 of 35 passes for 226 yards. Blount ran 30 times for 148 yards.

Andrew Luck completed 12 of 33 passes for 126 yards with two interceptions for the Colts (13-6).

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

LeGarrette Blount celebrates one of his three touchdowns on Sunday in Foxborough, Mass. GETTY IMAGES

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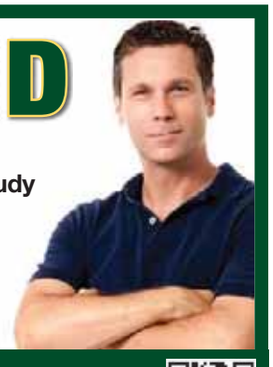
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No joy at ACC. Raptors go on holiday vs. Davis-less NOLA

DeMar DeRozan scored 22 points in a losing effort for Toronto on Sunday, as the Raptors dropped a 95-93 decision to the New Orleans Pelicans.

The Raptors ended their six-game homestand 2-4, and have lost seven of their last 10 games.

Tyreke Evans scored 26 points, while Alexis Ajinca finished with 22 for the Pelicans (20-20), who were playing without starters Anthony Davis and Jrue Holiday.

Lou Williams added 17 points for the Raptors (26-14), who suffered back-to-back home losses for the first time since last March. Greivis Vasquez finished with 16 points, Amir Johnson had 14 points and 10 rebounds and Patrick Patterson added 10 points.

The Raptors were looking forward to be home after a disappointing six-game road trip out west, but they'd won just two of five games heading into Sunday, and Friday's 110-89 rout by the Atlanta Hawks prompted a players-only meeting.

DeMar DeRozan goes to the rim against the New Orleans Pelicans' Quincy Pondexter on Sunday. RICK MADONIK/TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

The Raptors got off to their worst start of the season, however, with season lows for both the first quarter — 14 points — and first half — 36 points. THE CANADIAN PRESS

Premier League soccer

Man City falls to Arsenal

Arsenal finally ended its streak of poor away performances against top teams with a 2-0 victory at Manchester City.

Arsenal climbed above Tottenham into fifth place in the Premier League, one point behind Manchester United. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Downhill skiing

Vonn wins despite injuries

Lindsey Vonn won a downhill Sunday to match Annemarie Moser-Proell's 35-year-old record of 62 World Cup wins, capping a comeback from two serious knee surgeries.

The American clocked a time of one minute, 39.61 seconds. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

World moguls. Canadian woman wins in Austria

Montreal's Justine Dufour-Lapointe added to her Olympic gold medal by winning the world moguls title on Sunday, while Mikael Kingsbury of Deux-Montagnes, Que., took silver in the men's event.

Dufour-Lapointe, who earned bronze at the 2013 worlds in Norway, scored 87.25 points in the final. Defending champion Hannah Kearney of the United States, who took the title in 2005 and again two years ago, won silver with 85.66, while Brittney Cox of Australia gained 81.98 for the bronze medal.

"Every time I'm going to a competition I'm asking myself what my one true objective is. What my one true goal is that I'm setting by myself," said Dufour-Lapointe. "It's not like the colour of a medal or just a medal. It's the way I want to ski. For example, sometimes I'm setting for myself to ski the fastest for the day." THE CANADIAN PRESS

TFC-Sunderland swap has friendly side deals

Up $12 million US.

Questions remain about details of deal acquiring Jozy Altidore for Jermain Defoe

While the final verdict will come on the field, the business side of Toronto FC's ongoing rehaul is probably as good as it gets given the circumstances.

The arrival of U.S. international striker Jozy Altidore and Italian playmaker Sebastian Giovinco, whose signing is imminent according to a source, means that star midfielder and team linchpin Michael Bradley is surrounded by young, committed talent locked up for the next four years.

Altidore is 25. Bradley and Giovinco are 27.

Real Betis defender Damien Perquis, a 30-year-old French-born Poland international, remains on the Toronto radar.

Jermain Defoe is back in England, no longer a talented but confusing distraction.

On the financial front, there has been confusion over the exact nature of the Altidore-Defoe swap between Sunderland and Toronto.

While Toronto portrayed the deal as a swap with cash considerations, Sunderland told a different story.

"It's a straight player-for-player swap, no transfer fee involved," a Sunderland spokesman told The Canadian Press.

Asked about terms of the transfer, Toronto GM Tim Bezbatchenko told a news conference introducing Altidore on Friday that he was not permitted to disclose the details.

The Canadian Press has learned the deal is slightly more complicated than the pithy Sunderland summary.

Toronto gets two friendlies for free. And a source confirmed there is a bonus system tied into the number of games played by Altidore and Defoe for their new clubs.

With Altidore expected to miss Toronto games during the Gold Cup slated for July 7-26 — Toronto has four league games scheduled in July — and Defoe facing Cup as well as league play, Toronto expects to come out the better of that deal.

The friendlies and bonus system are expected to net Toronto $3 million US.

And there are an estimated savings of $9 million on the cost of Defoe versus Altidore over the next three years. The MLS Players Union listed Defoe's salary at $6.18 million last season. A source says Altidore's base figure in Toronto starts with a four.

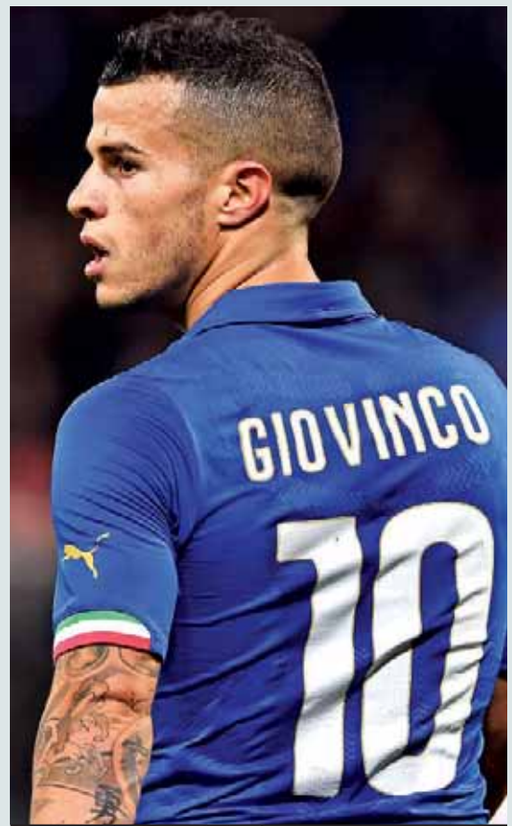
With Giovinco joining Altidore and Bradley as designated players, it looks like Brazilian striker Gilberto will be the odd man out unless something changes. Clubs are currently allowed three DPs, although there is the hope that may go up to four.

Since Giovinco is approaching the end of his contract, Toronto does not have to pay a transfer fee. It also means the Italian won't be available to Major League Soccer until July 1.

Thanks to that delay, Toronto's payroll will be a tad less in 2015 than 2014. Defoe plus Gilberto ($1.2 million last season) is more than Altidore and a half-season of Giovinco.

The numbers will be much higher in 2016 but TFC hopes an expanded, improved BMO Field will help pay for the bigger ticket. THE CANADIAN PRESS

Jozy Altidore GETTY IMAGES



In prying Italy's Sebastian Giovinco from Juventus, Toronto FC gets a highly-coveted play-making midfielder. GETTY IMAGES

Meet Giovinco

Toronto may pay big for little midfielder

The five-foot-five, 130-pound Sebastian Giovinco, known as the Atomic Ant, is an Italian international playmaker with the ability to take on defenders and score from set pieces.

He references his size in a trademark scoring celebration which involves putting his thumb on top of his head and leaving his little finger pointing to the sky.

"I'm not very big and many people told me over the years that I would never reach the top because of my size," he told fifa.com in a 2009 interview.

There reportedly has been no shortage of suitors for Giovinco with Arsenal, Chelsea, Liverpool, Monaco and Tottenham among the clubs linked to him recently. Such competition means he does not come cheap. While there will be no transfer fee due to the expiring contract, his wages will be high. THE CANADIAN PRESS

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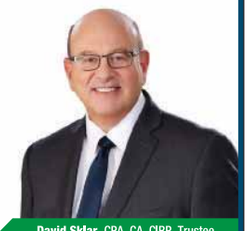

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Horoscopes by Sally Brompton

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You are assertive by nature but you also possess charisma and with Venus so strong in your chart at the moment you will charm the birds from the trees.

♉ Taurus
April 21 - May 21
You will either impress some very important people today or you will upset some very important people. There is no middle ground.

♊ Gemini
May 22 - June 21
Anyone who thinks that you will change your plans to fit in with what they want to do clearly does not know you well. Let them know you're the boss.

♋ Cancer
June 22 - July 23
If facts and figures don't add up then you must investigate the matter. Yes, you may annoy a few people but as it's your reputation and money at stake you can't afford to take chances.

♌ Leo
July 24 - Aug. 23
It is likely that you will have a heated difference of opinion with someone today and you must not back down. Others will respect you more if you stand up for yourself.

♍ Virgo
Aug. 24 - Sept. 23
You take your responsibilities seriously, which is good, but if you focus on them to the exclusion of everything else today you could miss out on a fun time. All work and no play is rarely a good idea.

♎ Libra
Sept. 24 - Oct. 23
Find a balance between being assertive and being passive. Cosmic activity in your fellow Air sign of Aquarius will see to it that the right opportunity arrives at the right time.

♏ Scorpio
Oct. 24 - Nov. 22
If you speak your mind today you will get away with it no matter how outrageous your comments may be. If you speak your mind tomorrow there may be negative consequences.

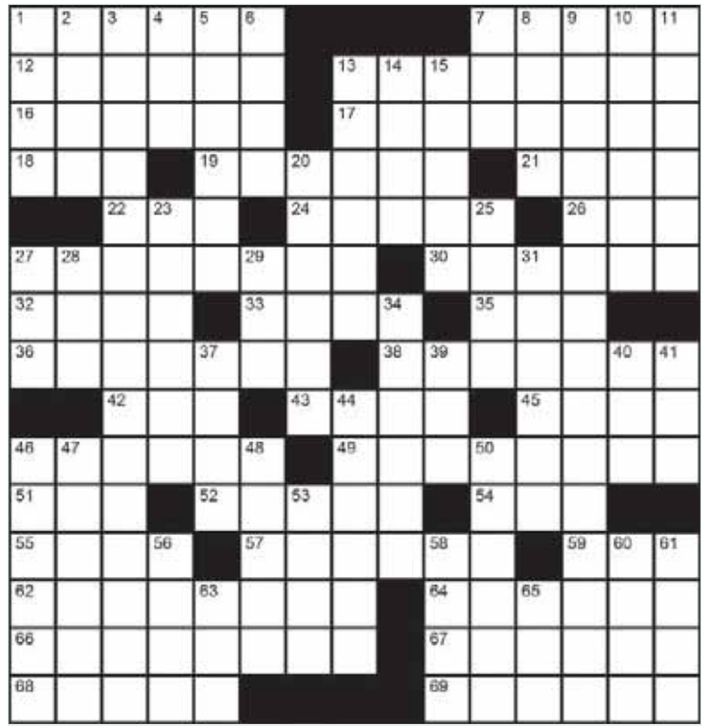
♐ Sagittarius
Nov. 23 - Dec. 21
If a friend asks for your opinion about something it will pay you to say what you think they want to hear, even if you believe the opposite. Arguments are best avoided over the next 24 hours.

♑ Capricorn
Dec. 22 - Jan. 20
Don't change things for the sake of it today because almost certainly you will have to change them back again when mind planet Mercury turns retrograde on Wednesday.

♒ Aquarius
Jan. 21 - Feb. 19
You won't care in the slightest what anyone thinks about you today. You are determined to show that you will follow your own path through life.

♓ Pisces
Feb. 20 - March 20
You may not be your sociable self today but in a way that's OK because you need to spend time in your own company. Think about life's direction.

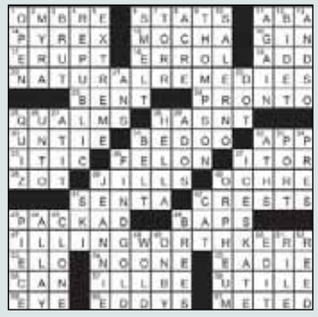
Crossword: Canada Across and Down by Kelly Ann Buchanan



Across
1. US federal holiday: Martin __ King Day
7. Current movie starring David Oyelowo as the Civil Rights leader at #1-Across
12. Author S.E. Hinton = Susan __ Hinton
13. Monument type honouring #1-Across in Washington, D.C.
16. Bays
17. Big name in typewriters when typewriters were big
18. T-__ pans
19. Classic video game platforms
21. British WWII submachine gun
22. Athletic
24. Singer Ms. Payne
26. Caustic stuff
27. Saint John, NB: Circular fort, as per Carleton __ Tower
30. Dwell
32. Tire: French
33. Glass Tiger's "My __"
35. Gladiator's 201
36. One of the Windward Islands
38. Songstress Joan
42. "Volare (__ Blu Dipinto Di Blu)"
43. Root vegetable
45. Amphibious sort
46. Robinson __ (Classic book)
49. Snow __ (Arctic birds)
51. "Superman" g.r.o.u.p.
52. Lohengrin aria: "__ Dream"
54. "Yay!"
55. Long-range weapon, commonly
57. Airline, __ Pacific
59. "Well!"
62. Soapstone
64. Flying bird, at times
66. Destroyed by acid
67. Bags
68. Canadian figure skating great Brian
69. "Remington __"

Down
1. Norse navigator Mr. Ericsson
2. Forearm bone
3. They often start 1-800...: 2 wds.
4. "Hurry!"
5. Millionaire's spread
6. Relaxation
7. First 'S' in USSR [abbr.]
8. '70s Spanish hit: "__ Tu"
9. Canadian animal breed (answer is the nickname of it) that achieved official national status in 2002: 3 wds.
10. Nautical friends
11. Skirt styles
13. "Good __" (Olde-style greeting)
14. Author Mr. Wiesel
15. Bungle
20. Buoyant
23. Apple songs
25. Rhyme scheme
27. Car ad fig.
28. Begin to spell out Saskatchewan's capital... "Give me __ '_'!"
29. Inc.'s cousin
31. #33-Across bit: "When I think of you __..."
34. "There's time still.": 2 wds.
37. Moisturizer ingredient
39. Family member
40. Bug
41. Mr. McMahon's
44. Declined
46. Cooking oil brand
47. Parish gig
48. 1961 Charlton Heston film: 2 wds.
50. Compete for a team position: 2 wds.
53. Satisfy
56. She-horse
58. Pharaoh symbols
60. Shoe part
61. "The '__ 'e knows above a bit..." - Rudyard Kipling
63. Maple Leafs, on scoreboards
65. 'Is', plurally

Friday's Crossword



Online

See today's answers at metronews.ca/answers

Conceptis Sudoku by Dave Green

How to play
Fill in the grid, so that every row, every column and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1-9. There is no math involved.

Friday's Sudoku

8	4	1	7	5	2	9	6	3
9	7	6	8	3	4	2	1	5
2	3	5	6	9	1	4	8	7
3	2	7	4	8	6	5	9	1
5	8	4	9	1	7	6	3	2
1	6	9	5	2	3	7	4	8
6	1	2	3	4	5	8	7	9
7	9	3	2	6	8	1	5	4
4	5	8	1	7	9	3	2	6

								6
		1		4			5	
	8				3		1	9
							7	3
	5		1		7		8	
9	4							
2	6		8				3	
	7			9		5		
3								

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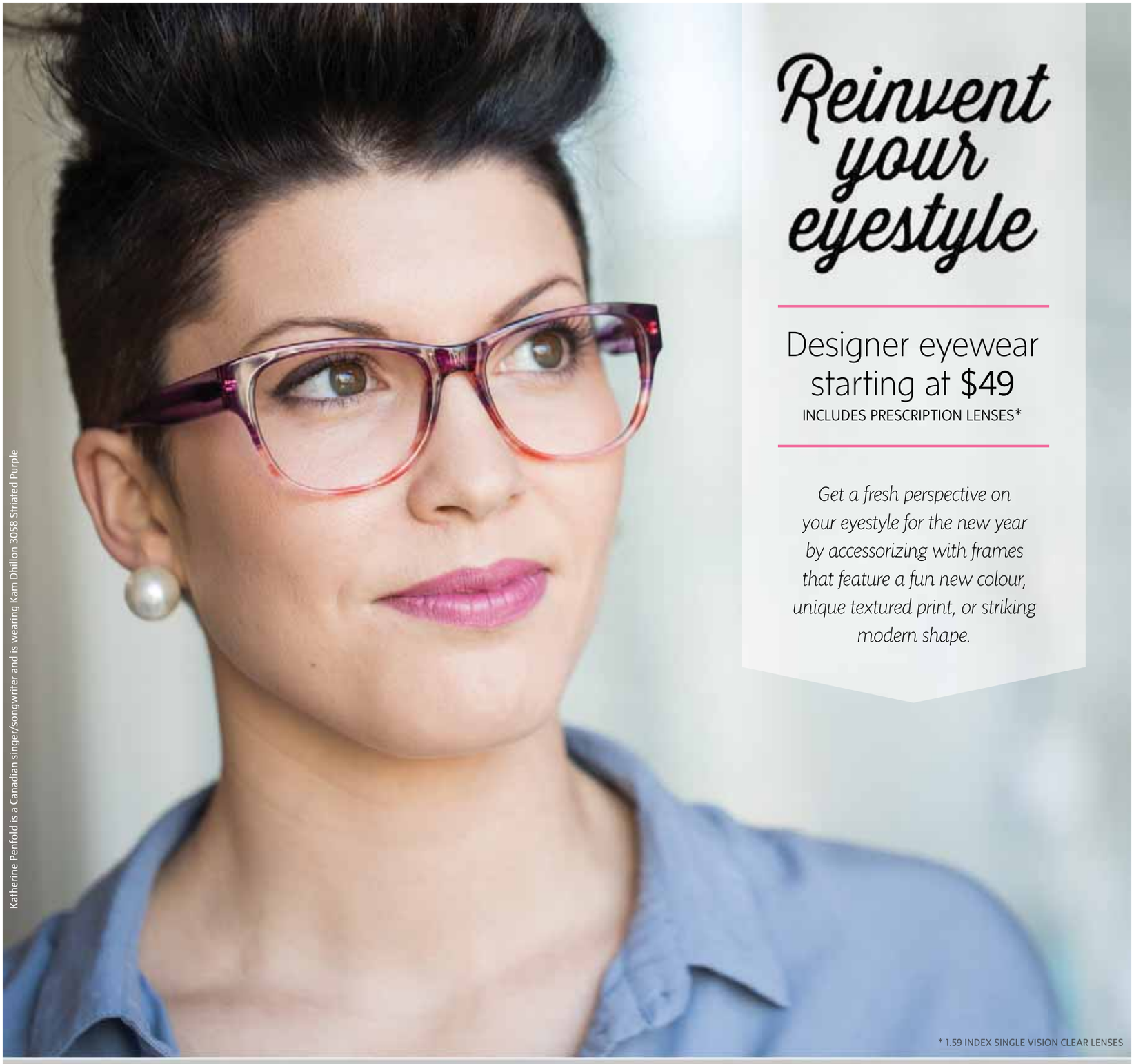
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